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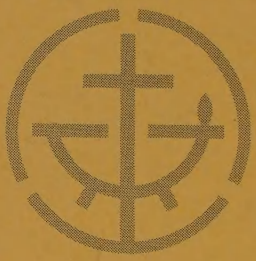
BENEFICENCE

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SYSTEMATIC AND PROPORTIONATE GIVING

Rev. T. MITCHELL



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CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SYSTEMATIC AND PROPORTIONATE GIVING

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THE HARTLEY LECTURE, DELIVERED TO THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CONFERENCE, AT SCARBOROUGH, JUNE 14, 1905

BY

REV. THOMAS MITCHELL

'Of Thine own have we given Thee.'—DAVID.
'There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more.'—THE PROVERBS.
'See that ye abound in this grace also.'—ST. PAUL.
'Freely ye have received, freely give.'—JESUS CHRIST.
'God loveth a cheerful giver.'—ST. PAUL.

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Dedication

TO THE MEMORY OF

REV. JOHN PETTY

MY THEOLOGICAL TUTOR

WHOSE SAINTLY CHARACTER AND WISE COUNSELS

HAVE BEEN AN ABIDING BENEDICTION

TO MY MINISTRY

and

TO

WILLIAM P. HARTLEY, ESQ., J.P.

THE FOUNDER OF THIS LECTURESHIP

WHOSE MUNIFICENCE TO CHRISTIAN AND PHILANTHROPIC

OBJECTS IS THE ADMIRATION OF ALL

THE CHURCHES

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PREFACE

WHEN I was appointed to this Lectureship, I felt at once that my subject must be one dealing with some phase of practical Church life or work. My time and energies for many years past have been so absorbed with the administrative work of the Church as to make profound or prolonged study of any Theological or Philosophical subject a practical impossibility. But in a great house there are many vessels, and in a great Church there are many departments; and each department depends in some measure for its full efficiency on all the others. And it is well for each man to find out his own aptitudes and limitations, and within these, 'serve his generation' as best he may.

Several friends suggested to me the topic of this lecture as being a timely and important one in itself, as supplying some variety to the Biblical and Theological subjects discussed in previous lectures, and as being one in which I had been interested nearly the whole of my ministry. I saw no sufficient reason to decline these suggestions, and hence this topic was selected.

My interest in this theme began thirty-five years ago. At that time I attended a Conference in the West Riding of Yorkshire of the ministers and principal laymen of the various churches in the locality, called by the Systematic Beneficence Society. I was much interested in the discussions of that assembly, and from that time began to practise myself, and to give a prominent place in my public teaching to, the duty and the privilege of systematic and

proportionate giving, as the one Scriptural, satisfactory and efficient method of Church finance. My experience since has amply confirmed the wisdom of the decision then reached. I believe this method to be right in itself; I believe ministers would add immensely to their influence for good if they would faithfully practise and fearlessly teach it; and I believe, if generally adopted, it would solve all the financial problems of our Church life to-day, and place at the disposal of the Church for her beneficent and aggressive work resources on such a scale as would equip her, as far as material wealth can, for every mission her Master has called her to execute.

With these convictions, the author commends the teaching of this lecture to the consideration and adoption of all the members of the Church in whose interests it is delivered; and to such other general readers as may honour it by perusal. And if it should lead to a wider study of the subject, and to a more general practice of systematic and proportionate giving, he will not regret being necessitated to crowd into a busy life this small additional service to his Church.

As the title of the lecture is 'Christian Beneficence, with Special Reference to Systematic and Proportionate Giving,' it seemed appropriate, and indeed necessary, that the principles and motives, the aims and methods of 'Christian Beneficence' should be broadly and briefly stated, as introductory to the specific form and channel of beneficence indicated by the latter part of the title, 'Systematic and Proportionate Giving.'

THOMAS MITCHELL.

LONDON, *May 27, 1905.*

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SYSTEMATIC AND PROPORTIONATE GIVING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE DEFINED

THIS is a timely topic. In a materialistic age, when time, thought, and energy are almost exclusively devoted to the acquisition and expenditure of wealth, it is well to be reminded that there is treasure spiritual as well as treasure material, treasure the pursuit of which ennobles but does not degrade, treasure not held by the uncertain tenure of mere earthly possessions —treasure in the heavens, 'where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.' This is the treasure of saintly character and unselfish service for others. Jesus Christ 'went about doing good,' and by teaching and example He calls upon all His disciples to perpetuate His ministry of

Timely Theme.

ceaseless beneficence. In the rush and excitement, the struggle and friction of life to-day, that is a needed admonition which reminds us that we must make time to pray and time to serve; that man's great gifts of mind and heart are not to be exclusively employed with material things, but that the noblest life demands that spiritual matters shall have their rightful place; that man exists in society, not only to receive service, but give it. We are members one of another, and service for others is the highest and worthiest aim and achievement of life.

Practical.

And this theme is as practical and personal as it is timely. Service for others is not the privilege of the few, but the inheritance of all. Whatever our sphere, our talents, our resources, we can serve—serve with the aptitudes we possess and in the spheres we occupy. The rich can serve, and, not with their riches only, but also with their sympathy, kindness, and direct personal help; and the poor can serve, and some of the most sincere and humane service of life is by the poor to the poor, unseen and unrecognized, but genuine and noble. The young may serve with their buoyant spirits, their abounding energy, their invincible hopefulness; and the old may serve with their ripe wisdom, their long experience, their stable confidence and trust. The healthy may serve by helping the helpless, comforting the sorrowing, cheering the despondent, vindicating the oppressed, saving the lost; and the sickly may serve if only

by calm resignation to the divine will, by loving testimony to the sustaining power of the grace of God, for 'they also serve who only stand and wait.' There are many things in life which millions among us may never hope to possess, but the door of service is open to all. Jesus Christ came 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' He stands at the head of the noble brotherhood of service for humanity, but the humblest, as the highest, may share in the dignity and privilege of service for others.

The term 'beneficence' means 'doing good,' just as the term 'benevolence' means 'willing good.' A benevolent man is kindly, sympathetic, generous, with an ear ready for any tale of sorrow, and a hand ready for any case of need; a beneficent man translates these humane and generous sentiments into actual deeds of service for others. He not only feels, but acts; not only sees the need, but responds to it; not only discovers the door of opportunity, but enters it. A 'benefactor' is the doer of a good deed, usually a deed of helpfulness to others less favoured than himself; a 'benefaction' is the good deed actually done. Beneficence thus is doing good, rather than merely willing, planning, or intending to do it; it is the fruit of which benevolence is the root—the one the achievement, the other the motive which prompts and produces it.

Definition of Beneficence.

Christian beneficence is good-doing inspired and controlled by the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ.

It is not denied that outside the circle of recognized Christian influence many a kindly deed is done, and many a worthy service to humanity is rendered. The instincts of the human heart, training, environment, patriotism, the impulses of social life may all inspire kindly service. But equally, it will not be denied that the coming of Christ, the ministry, teaching, example of Christ, the spirit of Christ have lifted 'beneficence' to a loftier plane than it ever occupied before. They have set before it higher ideals, given a wider sweep to its activities, inspired it with a deeper intensity, and sustained it by divine and abiding power. Christian beneficence is the purest, the most active, the most unselfish existent to-day. The strongest force amongst us making for kindness, sympathy, helpfulness is the record of what Christ did, the precepts which He enunciated, the life which He lived. 'Christian beneficence' is the beneficence which the ministry of Christ creates, inspires, controls and sustains.

Christian Beneficence.

The supreme motive in producign Christian beneficence is love—the love of Christ possessing men, and inciting them to love and serve each other. Where love is wanting there can be no Christian beneficence; but where love prevails, everything calculated to keep and bless mankind will abound. What a picture of love has been painted by the master-hand of St. Paul in his First Epistle to

Its Motive: St. Paul's Teaching.

the Corinthians (ch. xiii). It is suggestive that we should owe this masterpiece to the mind and pen of St. Paul, the apostle of heroic faith, rather than to the mind and pen of St. John, the apostle of gentleness and affection. But so it is. St. Paul assigns love the supreme place among the great qualities of Christian character. Without love, eloquence—human or angelic—the tongues of men and of angels are but as 'sounding brass or a clanging cymbal!' Without love the knowledge of all mysteries, the widest plans of benevolence, the very spirit of martyrdom are all useless and vain. 'Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not provoked, taketh no account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things' (1 Cor. xiii. 4-7). Love is supreme and eternal. Faith is necessary as the condition of pardon and life; hope saves by the inspiration it gives; but when faith is lost in sight, and hope in the realization of its objects, love will live on in undying power and blessing. 'But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love' (v. 13).

And the teaching of St. Peter is equally emphatic with the teaching of St. Paul, in assigning the loftiest place among Christian qualities to a world-wide philanthropy. 'Adding on your part all diligence,

in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge temperance; and in your temperance patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Peter i. 5-8). What a noble structure we have here! The basis is laid in personal faith; and on that foundation is built courage, intelligence, temperance, and patience, great qualities, but not exclusively Christian. To give them the right emphasis, complexion, spirit, we must add 'godliness.' Let that permeate, suffuse, sanctify all the rest. And then add 'love of the brethren, and love,' or in the more familiar words of the Authorized Version, 'brotherly kindness and charity.' The one is the affection we should cherish for our Christian brethren, those of our common faith, the gracious bond uniting believers; the other, the larger, diviner thing love, love for the whole human race, for man as man, irrespective of colour, clime, or race, the motive to service for humanity always and everywhere. Wherever these qualities are built into human character, they supply the most perfect equipment for human service, and the strongest incentive to Christian beneficence. The crowning quality of human character is not intelligence, strength, or self-control, but philanthropy—love—

Teaching of St. Peter.

evoking the glad consecration of time, energy, and wealth to the alleviation of human sorrow, the deliverance of men from guilt and misery, and the salvation—social, moral, and spiritual—of the entire human race.

The method of this service will be readily discovered by any intelligent mind, prompted by a devout and sensitive heart. Where the spirit of Christian beneficence exists, the channels in which it shall run, the forms of expression which it will take, will be determined by aptitude, environment, and opportunity. To the inquiry, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" the answer, prompt and clear, will come; and it will usually indicate the work nearest to hand, and for which the worker has fitness. Christian beneficence will work through personal character; and this is, indeed, the basis of any real and permanent service for humanity. What a man *is* is as important as what he *does*, and will usually determine it. A distinguished statesman declared that 'Englishmen listen to men of genius, but they follow men of character'; and the worth of personal character will ever largely determine the measure of our service to men. By rectitude, by lofty ideals of life, by fidelity to conviction and to duty, by the attractions of a tender heart, a genial temper, a Christly deportment, men serve, and serve effectually, each other.

Methods of Service.

1. Character.

And Christian beneficence will act best through

each man's own gifts and aptitudes. How vast and varied are men's endowments, and how vast and varied the spheres of beneficent activity in which they may be employed! Some can plan, others can carry out; the one is skilful in organizing, the other in executing, and each is the complement of the other, and necessary to his complete efficiency and success. Some have the gift of teaching, and can impart truth in a way to interest, instruct and edify. Some have the power of intense sympathy, and can soothe the sorrowing, comfort the mourners, and bring into the abodes of sickness and distress the sunshine of a great human love, with its warmth and light and joy. In almost infinitely varied ways, men's varied gifts may be employed in the wide and inviting fields of Christian beneficence. Wherever there are talent and opportunity, they constitute an impressive obligation to 'go work in the Lord's vineyard'; and devotion and fidelity ever prompt to vigilance and fidelity in 'the Master's business.' St. Paul stated the supreme fact in Christian life when he affirmed to the Corinthian Church, 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price'; and when he added the great deduction, 'Therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are His,' he affirmed at once the privilege and responsibility, uniform and paramount, of Christian beneficence.

2. Aptitudes.

And further, Christian beneficence will find fitting expression in generous gifts to Christian and

philanthropic objects. Contributions to religious purposes have marked religious life and service all along the line of history from the dawn of time; and as religion has become larger, truer, fuller, by successive revelations of the divine will to men, gifts to humanitarian objects have filled a larger place in the offerings to God by devout men. The devotee of heathenism pours out his treasures for the erection of the temples and the maintenance of the institutions of worship. The Jew was under legal obligation to contribute his 'tithe' for the maintenance of the Levites; and he also gave large 'free-will offerings' to other objects of social and religious life. It is inconceivable, then, that the Christian, with his fuller light, higher privilege, richer life, should occupy a lower plane of generosity or devotion than the heathen or the Jew of an earlier age. God still invites the thank-offerings of His loving disciples for the maintenance of His worship, the spread of His kingdom, and the support of philanthropic agencies and institutions throughout the land; and He invites *all* His disciples, the humblest and the highest, to share, according to their ability, in this type and sphere of Christian beneficence. And on the rational and scriptural principle of giving 'as God prospers us,' this door of service is open to all, and should be entered by all. If our resources are small, our gifts cannot be large; but we can all recognize the principle of stewardship in what we possess, and can

3. Gifts.

devote some definite portion of our income regularly and religiously to the cause of God. The advantages of this method of honouring the Lord with our substances are great and many. It enables a man to form an intelligent opinion of the actual amount which he contributes, and to ascertain whether that amount is an adequate proportion of his income, whether it is the measure of his duty, and whether it is a just expression of his gratitude and love to God. It also imports religious principle into one of the first of religious duties, and rescues from mere impulse, mere fitful uncertainty, what assuredly ought to be controlled by intelligent conviction and scriptural teaching. It further checks the growth of the spirit of avarice, keeps the heart tender and sympathetic amid increasing wealth, fosters just views of human stewardship, and affords an antidote against the peril implied in the caution: 'If riches increase, set not thine heart on them.' And, once more, it honours God by honouring His word; by increasing the sum total of Christian gifts, and thus realizing more fully and speedily God's purposes amongst men; and by making giving to God a joy, a blessing, an act of worship and thanksgiving, instead of being regarded, as it is to be feared it often is, as a burden and a bore. On these lines, Christian beneficence can wisely and successfully run—run with glory to God, much blessing to the benefactor, and increased power and efficiency to

the agencies and institutions of religion and philanthropy.

And happily, illustrations of such beneficent service have been furnished by every age of the Christian era, from every grade and rank of human society, and in every department of human life. The spirit of Jesus Christ is the monopoly of no age, or rank or sect. 'The fruits of the spirit'—Christly temper and Christly service—can flourish anywhere, wherever the seeds of spiritual truth can find congenial soil and climate. Sometimes a great personality incarnates in itself in a pre-eminent degree this spirit of unselfish service, and creates new eras of religious life and progress, and new dispensations of philanthropic activity and success; but the spirit can live and flourish in the lowliest spheres, in the humblest home, and in the least pretentious church. John Wesley was one of the noblest examples of Christian beneficence our land has ever produced. From the date of his conversion in Aldersgate Street, London, to the day of his coronation in City Road, London, his life was one of untiring activity in doing good. For fifty years, with quenchless zeal he proclaimed the great Evangel to the masses of his countrymen. And he was as generous in spirit as he was ceaseless in toil. He gave away all he had. John Howard illustrated the same devotion to humanity in his unequalled efforts to alleviate the conditions of prison life in

Examples.

John Wesley.

John Howard.

England and Europe. He sought to remedy the barbarities of prison discipline, and bring some ray of hope to the criminal and abandoned classes of the community; and he has left a name never to be forgotten for his beneficent zeal and fidelity in seeking to serve the most degraded of men. John Williams carried the Gospel to the regions beyond—to the fierce tribes of cannibals in the South Seas. With apostolic fervour and devotion he prosecuted his great mission, winning thousands from barbarism to Christianity, from cannibalism to Christ, till at last he fell, a martyr, at the hands of the very tribe he had gone to save. These are splendid examples of Christian beneficence, and the record might be multiplied a thousandfold alike in the humblest and the highest walks of life.

John Williams.

The limit of this service for Christ and humanity is the term of each human life. It is true that men of exceptional gifts, position, and opportunity may accomplish works of Christly service which will continue their benediction for generations after the men producing them have ceased to exist among men. The statesman, the poet, the missionary, the philanthropist, may originate streams of beneficent activity that will flow on in unchecked force and blessing for centuries after such a benefactor's active work is done. It is equally true that 'the memory of the just is blessed,' and that every good man lives on after death, in the influence and inspiration of his life and work. There are

Limit of Service.

names on the Church's great roll of fame that can never die — her prophets, apostles, confessors, missionaries and martyrs. Still, to men generally, the limit of personal influence and, to all, the limit of active service is the life of to-day. It is on our own time that our impression must be made, and it is those of our own day that must share in our Christian service. The members of our families and churches; the circle of our friends and acquaintances; those about us, or those distant from us, who are in want of what we can supply—the ignorant, the oppressed, the needy, the wandering, the lost—it is to these that our Christian help must be given, if given at all. And as the opportunity for such beneficent service must soon pass away, how appropriate is the Master's motto for all His disciples: 'I must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.'

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE

CHAPTER II

JESUS CHRIST: ITS IDEAL AND INSPIRATION

Supreme Authority of Jesus Christ.

To the Christian the authority of Jesus Christ is supreme and undisputed. He is at once Saviour and King. We follow other leaders so far as they tread in His footsteps and execute His commission; we listen to other teachers so far as they utter His message by His authority and appointment. Our supreme allegiance is to Christ Himself. He is the one infallible authority in teaching and life from which there is no appeal; He is the one Saviour of men, the one Deliverer from the guilt and peril and dominance of sin; He is the one infinite and abiding source of power for service or sacrifice. In His revelation of the divine Father, He has brought a new hope to humanity; in His life of stainless purity and boundless beneficence, He has furnished at once an example and an incentive to the highest character and the most unselfish service; and in His redemptive work, He has opened the kingdom of heaven—here

and hereafter—to all believers. He is our Leader and King, and it is our highest joy to acknowledge His sway, and to do His will. In seeking guidance, then, on the truest service of life — Christian beneficence —we look to Him as our ideal and inspiration.

OUR IDEAL

In three respects is Jesus Christ the Church's ideal: in character, in service, in fidelity. Jesus Christ was a man, a perfect man. He was born into a human life, and passed through the successive stages of childhood and youth to full manhood. 'He advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' He was a man of like passions with ourselves, subject to the innocent experiences of a real human nature, and exhibiting the magnificent possibilities that are open to a pure and consecrated life. He was hungry and sorrowful; He joined in the glad festivities of the marriage feast, and He visited the house of mourning to solace the bereaved. He sat by the well-side, weary and thirsty with the day's travel, and He entered Jerusalem in royal state as its recognized Messiah and rightful King. He was divine, but He was human—perfectly human. And He was sinless. No stain of guilt soiled His character, no failure of duty marred His ministry. He could challenge His severest critics—'Which of you convinceth Me of sin?' He had every human excellence—masculine and feminine—the courage, integrity, endurance, purity of the noblest of men,

1. In Character.

and the tenderness, sympathy, fidelity, devotion of the noblest of women. He was the incarnation of holiness, beneficence, self-sacrifice. And yet He was imitable. Men can not only admire His character, but copy it. He was a man with men—He talked to them, lived with them, helped them, saved them. He is thus the ideal of the worthiest service man can render. What He was and did, we, with our own gifts, and in our own sphere and opportunity, may be and do. He is our example, an example without a flaw; He is our ideal, an ideal without a defect; and we may copy that example, and make actual that ideal in our own life to-day. And happy will the Church be, indeed, and mighty, too, when all nominal Christians become real, each and all, living embodiments of the character of Christ.

The public ministry of Christ was limited to three brief years, but how full of service those years were!

2. In Service. Perhaps the briefest and best summary of His public life is given in the significant sentence: 'Who went about doing good.' He sought not wealth, power, fame, ease, or pleasure, but 'went about doing good'—not talking about it, organizing it, commending it, but doing it. The two great activities of the life of Christ were teaching and healing. Wherever He came He brought the message of a great revelation, the story of an infinite love; and wherever He came He brought the power of a new life, the possibility and the promise of a great salvation.

One of the most suggestive titles ever given to Christ came from the lips of aged Simeon, as the infant Jesus was presented in the temple, in harmony with the requirements of Jewish law. 'A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of My people Israel.' He gave light on the nature and claims of God, and on the simplicity, sincerity, and spirituality of worship. His declaration to the woman of Samaria was one of the most remarkable ever uttered: 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' He gave light on the peril and prevalence of sin, and the fact and sufficiency of human redemption. He gave light on the warmth and certainty of the great Father's welcome to every returning prodigal, of the saintliness of character and nobility of life, of which the humblest and poorest of the human family is capable, and of the great future, the home of the redeemed in heaven, the Father's house with its many mansions, 'the inheritance of the saints in light.' He enunciated laws of life that would destroy all bitterness, strife, and hatred everywhere by the introduction of the Golden Rule: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' And His teaching was so attractive that men 'wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth'; so authoritative that men said: 'Never man spake like this man;' so human and intelligible that 'the

(*a*) His Teaching.

common people heard Him gladly.' And it is the purpose of Christ that this ministry of teaching, with all its illuminating power, should still go on. His visible presence is withdrawn, and He has left no written records; but He poured living truth into the prepared and receptive minds of His trusty disciples, truth now stored and enshrined in the Holy Scriptures, and truth that constitutes a message of life and salvation to all the nations of men and to the end of time. It is our high privilege to receive that truth ourselves, and it is equally our high duty to disseminate it by missionary agencies to the ends of the earth.

(*b*) **His Miracles.**

The miracles of Christ, whilst the credentials of a divine messenger, and the proof of a divine character and claim, were pre-eminently the expression of a boundless compassion with human suffering, the outflow of the infinite benevolence of the divine Worker. Some few are of evidential value, as the cure of the paralytic, those wrought before the disciples of John the Baptist, and the resurrection of Lazarus; but in the main, if the sacred writers assign any motive for the performance of these 'mighty works,' it is sympathy with suffering humanity. These miracles were marked by great variety; they were done publicly, under the eyes of the most critical of men; and they were always done with such reserve power as suggested ability to multiply them a thousandfold if the purposes of the Worker

demanded it. But they were pre-eminently beneficent. Christ fed the hungry thousands by the multiplication of the loaves, but refused to turn the stones of the desert into bread to satisfy His own keen hunger. His was a ministry of boundless and increasing mercy: He healed the sick, cleansed the leper, gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, life to the dead, salvation to the lost. The ministry of Christ gave the world the richest display of unselfish service, of unstinted beneficence, it has ever witnessed.

And equally suggestive with the character and work of Christ was the spirit in which this service was given. That it was done in a spirit of fidelity, sympathy, and unfailing optimism will not be disputed; but the one all-embracing motive was complete loyalty to the Father's will. This was the source of the perfect harmony of that unique life, the well-spring of its never-failing streams of human sympathy, the fountain of its inspiration in service and success, in defeat and failure, in life and death. As a boy in the temple, Jesus said: 'I must be about my Father's business.' As a man, He said: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work' (John iv. 34). He felt Himself to be the executor of the great and gracious purpose of another, and He was 'straitened' until it was 'accomplished.' 'I am come down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me'

3. In Spirit.

(John vi. 38). And in calm submission, as in most strenuous toil, this motive was supreme. In that culmination of His suffering—'the agony in the garden'—the same note is heard: 'Not My will but Thine be done.' Love to the Father, loyalty to His will, consecration to His gracious purpose—this was the spirit of Christ's ministry, the atmosphere in which He lived and served, taught and healed, denounced sin and commended holiness, suffered and died.

Jesus Christ: our great Example.

And should not this character, service, spirit of Christ be reproduced in the lives of His disciples to-day? He is our ideal, to be studied, admired, and copied. What Christ was—upright, humane, unselfish, devoted—He desires us to be. And what Christ did in His life of increasing beneficence He has made possible for us to do. The talents and opportunities of men vary constantly, but the great ideal for all never changes. We are to be what He was, and serve as He did, with the same lofty aims, the same unfailing constancy, the same tone, temper, trust, fidelity. What a remarkable and inspiring saying of our Lord's is this: 'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto the Father' (John xiv. 12). First, such a believer shall do the same 'works'—instruct the ignorant, soothe the sorrowing, help the helpless. Secondly, 'greater works shall he do.' What can be greater than healing? Salvation. Just as the spiritual transcends

the physical, the worth of the inner man the circumstances of the outer, the abiding the temporary, so the 'dispensation of the Spirit' will witness greater triumphs of power and blessing than even the ministry of Christ ever produced. Because He went 'to the Father' the Holy Spirit was given, and the power of Pentecost equipped the Church for her world-wide mission, and alike in the immediate triumphs won, and in the conquests of all succeeding generations, 'greater works' than these that marked the ministry of Christ have been done by His disciples. The great need of every age has been that the 'ideal' of the Christ should become the 'actual' in all His followers. When this is fully realized there will come an accession of power, blessing, prosperity to the Church of which we have little conception to-day; every form of selfishness will disappear, all ignoble motives will die, all unworthy ambitions will perish, and the Church will be solely concerned to adequately interpret and represent Jesus Christ to men, and will be entirely devoted to the work of extending His kingdom to the ends of the earth. Christ will then live again in the work of all His disciples, and the ancient words will be applicable as ever to millions of believers —'went about doing good.'

OUR INSPIRATION

Christianity differs from all the great religions of men in the fact that it rests not only upon a system

of doctrines, or a code of ethics, but upon the record of the personal history of its founder. 'The Revised Version of the New Testament consists of one hundred and ninety-four pages, and there are not five in which the sacred name does not occur, or is not directly alluded to, and in some it occurs twenty times. Of the religions now existing in the world, Buddism is said to number four hundred million, and Mohammedanism one hundred and twenty million votaries; yet were we to strike out the person of Sakya, the founder of Buddhism, and that of Mahomet of Mohammedanism out of their respective systems, their religions as systems of religion would remain intact. The same is true of Brahminism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and every other religion of the past or the present. It is true even of Judaism, for the person of Moses might be removed out of it, but the system would remain intact.

Peculiarity of Christianity.

All these religions have founders, but they have not one of them erected their systems on their own persons. But Christianity is so completely based on the person of its Founder that if we remove every reference to Jesus Christ out of the New Testament, the brief remainder becomes a mass of shapeless ruins.'[1] This is a most significant fact. With Christianity Christ is everything. He is 'the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.' Apart from the record of His

[1] *Manual of Christian Evidences*, p. 4.—Canon Row.

personal life and ministry, it could not have originated, and apart from Him now it would cease to be. Take Christ out of Christianity and the system collapses; remove Christ from the New Testament, and the record is meaningless; eliminate Christ from the believer's experience, and its vitality disappears; abstract Christ from the beneficent forces of the age, and they are bereft of life and power. Christ is the one quickening, vitalizing force in all the great moral, and spiritual, and humanitarian agencies and institutions of our times. There is profound truth and suggestiveness in Christ's unique claim—'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' He is the Life, the inspiration of the noblest human life, and the worthiest human service of all the ages.

Testimony of Mr. Lecky.

In Mr. Lecky's *History of Morality from Augustus to Charlemagne*[1] there is a remarkable testimony to the character and influence of Christ on personal and national life. This author 'did not accept Christianity as a divine revelation,' and hence his testimony may be claimed as impartial. 'It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; and has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exerted so deep

[1] Vol. ii., p. 8.

an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists. This has been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution, the fanaticism, which have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration.' This significant testimony is in undoubted harmony with all the experience of the past, and the facts of to-day. Jesus Christ is the 'example,' the 'incentive,' the 'enduring principle of regeneration' to humanity everywhere. Three lines of proof demonstrate this: the testimony of history; the experience of individual men; and the elevating power of Christ on communities of men.

The Testimony of History.

What name stands the highest in human estimation to-day? Is it that of conqueror, philosopher, moralist in the past, or of scholar, statesman, or monarch in the present? Is it not Jesus of Nazareth? The names of the rulers and politicians of Rome in Christ's days are known to comparatively few; the name of Christ is known in an ever-widening circle as years pass by. Pontius Pilate is better known than the emperor under whom he served; but that is solely because he presided at the trial of Jesus. He has shared everlasting remembrance, if also everlasting infamy,

by the suggestive phrase: 'Crucified under Pontius Pilate.' History has no name that stands as high to-day as the name of Jesus Christ. The despised Nazarene has filled the world with His fame. Abraham and Moses, Elijah and Isaiah, Peter, Paul, John, are great names, but that of Jesus outshines them all. His is the 'name above every name.' And as in the past, so in the future: 'His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him happy' (Ps. lxxii. 17).

The power of Christ over individual men, sanctifying them, binding them to His person by an impassioned devotion, and evoking the consecration of all their powers to the propagation of His kingdom, is one of the most remarkable facts in religious history. Christ Himself is the inspiration to the realization in individual men of His own ideals. The merest enumeration of the names of a few of the Church's great leaders would demonstrate this. Saul of Tarsus, a gifted and bigoted Pharisee, a determined foe of the infant Church, 'saw the Lord,' and from that hour, with quenchless ardour 'built up the faith he had sought to destroy.' John Wycliffe realized Christ as his, and he became the first of English religious reformers. Martin Luther, under the power of Christ, with magnificent heroism, sought to purify the Church from the degrading

The Power of Christ over individual Men.

devices of the priestcraft of his time. John Wesley saw Christ, and became the most successful evangelist of the eighteenth century. William Wilberforce felt the spell of Christ's spirit, and gave himself to the work of emancipating the slaves in the British dominons. George Müller yielded himself to Christ, and founded the orphanages at Bristol. And in every walk of life triumphs equally significant, if less conspicuous, testify to the inspiration of Christ as the motive to the highest service.

The Influence of Christ on heathen Tribes.

And the power of Christ over individual men has its counterpart in the elevating influence He has exerted on degraded tribes, communities and nations. To supply all the evidence that is available on this point would be to write the history of the Christian Church. St. Paul had seen proofs of the power of Christ on such varying conditions and civilizations of men that he triumphantly declared: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth: to the Jew first and also to the Greek.' At Ephesus and Corinth, at Athens and Rome, its triumphs had been won. Missionaries came to England many centuries ago, and what we are to-day in our best life we owe to that fact. And in no age have more glorious results been seen than in our own. The records of modern missionary enterprise constitute a further edition of the Acts of the Apostles. Moffatt and Livingstone in Africa, Hunt in Fiji, Chalmers in

New Guinea, Judson in Burmah, Carey in India, Paton in the New Hebrides, and other devoted messengers of Christ in other lands, have witnessed such proofs of the power of Christ in the moral and spiritual elevation of degraded communities as are not surpassed by any record of sacred story. And these constitute an array of proofs such as should convince the most sceptical, and thrill the heart of every believer with gratitude, hope and joy. For work, endurance, fidelity, self-sacrifice, Christ is the Church's unfailing inspiration and strength.

THE BENEFICENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER III

ITS PRACTICAL RESULTS

Criticism of Christianity.

It is sometimes a subject of adverse criticism that Christianity lays special emphasis on passive rather than active virtues, that it inculcates humility, patience, submission, gentleness, forgiveness rather than courage, energy, determination. This is no doubt true, though it is not for one moment conceded that a Christian is less heroic or energetic or strong because of his Christianity. Many a Christian—man and woman alike—has exhibited the highest heroism and the greatest endurance in the interests of right and truth, of duty and humanity. The fields of philanthropy and Christian missions have witnessed some of the finest illustrations of courage and fidelity the world has ever seen, qualities that have never been surpassed by the more showy exploits of daring and endurance on the field of battle. Perhaps an explanation of the emphasis which Christianity lays on the gentler qualities of human character may be

found in two things: the character of Christ, and the needs of humanity. Christ was a perfect man. He combined in perfect proportions the most diverse qualities, courage and gentleness, strength and meekness, the most robust manliness with the most winsome tenderness. And Christian teaching aims at producing a complete man, balanced, not one-sided, with every worthy quality cultured and developed. And also, men specially need the inculcation of the passive virtues—love, trust, humaneness. Savages are often courageous, and as crafty and cruel. Savages fight, oppress, steal, kill; Christians are taught to forgive, help, save. Christ thus gives to humanity what it most needs, what supplies its greatest want, and what, in perfecting the man, enriches every quality of his complex nature. The beneficence of Christianity may be seen in (1) the life of the early Church; (2) the influence it has exerted in the social life of men; and (3) the monuments of philanthropy in our midst to-day.

(1) THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The character of the early Church must ever be a subject of profound interest to every succeeding generation of Christian men. It was founded through the ministry of Christ Himself, and was moulded and ministered to by His immediate successors, the apostles; and many of its members must have had personal acquaintance with Christ, and known something

The early Church.

of the magnetism of His personality, and the wisdom and winsomeness of his speech. This Church was the beginning of organized Christianity, the nucleus around which every other Christian community, of all climates and all subsequent ages, has gathered. What, then, were the main features of this Church? What was its most prominent characteristic? What was the dominant note of its life? It was human, and hence it had the imperfections incident to humanity; and yet it was 'the salt of the earth,' 'the light of the world'; and it supplied a most striking contrast, in the main features of its life, to the world around it. 'While the world around was settling into the sadness of unalleviated despair, the Church was irradiated with an eternal hope, and rejoicing with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In the world men were hateful and hating one another; in the Church the beautiful ideal of human brotherhood was carried into practice. The Church had learnt her Saviour's lessons—man was honoured for being simply man; every soul was regarded as precious because for every soul Christ died; the sick were tended, the poor relieved; labour was represented as noble, not a thing to be despised; purity and resignation, peacefulness and pity, humility and self-denial, courtesy and self-respect, were looked upon as essential qualifications for all who were called by the name of Christ.'[1]

Unquestionably the chief feature of the early

[1] *Early Years of Christianity.*—Dean FARRAR.

Church was its beneficence. It lived to do good. The love of Christ had subdued its natural selfishness, and it shared the tenderness and benevolence of its Lord. It is thus described: 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and no one of them said that aught of the things that he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need' (Acts iv. 32-35). And 'the Church multiplied and grew.' It possessed all the conditions of strength and progress. It was a community of love and benevolence and peace — pure, devout, beneficent—the incarnation of the spirit and mission of Christ. No finer representation of unselfish service has ever been exhibited to men. In this quality, it is the pattern for all subsequent generations, the ideal for all time. Community of goods may not be possible to-day; that was a temporary arrangement in exceptional conditions; but the oneness of spirit and aim, of sympathy and effort, of that day is the possible and permanent heritage of the Church in every age.

Its most prominent Feature

(2) THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE SOCIAL LIFE OF MEN

Rome at the Christian Era.

When Christ came, Rome was practically mistress of the world. Nearly every nation of the then known world recognized her authority, submitted to her laws, and paid tribute into her treasury. Judea itself was a Roman province, governed by a Roman procurator, and assessed for taxation to her exchequer. If any nation in the world's history had the freest and fullest opportunity of realizing its own ideals, and of showing what life might be made, that nation was the Roman empire. With all but unlimited power, with all but boundless territory, and with all but measureless resources, she could show to the world the best, or the worst, of what the unrestricted exercise of human power can produce. And what was the result of this gigantic experiment, the most gigantic the world has ever seen? Did it result in higher character, purer life, and more humane dispositions? Were the rulers better, more upright, more considerate? And were the ruled more contented and prosperous? The answer is clear, uniform and terrible. Judged by any standard that makes life worth living, that great experiment was a ghastly failure. Unrestricted power deluged continents in blood; it degraded life to the lowest conceivable depths; and in the decline and fall of that Empire there is uttered a warning of frightful significance of the peril of human power

uncontrolled by truth and the grace of God. One writer observes: 'Society was profoundly gangrened;' another: 'In Rome every vice flaunted itself with revolting cynicism,' and that 'the public games had introduced a frightful corruption;' a third: 'The heathen world was ethically as well as religiously at the point of dissolution, it had become as bankrupt in morals as in faith, and there was no power at hand from which restoration could proceed;' while a fourth adds: 'Dire corruption, more terrible than any invader, has taken violent possession, not of the walls of the city, but of the mind of the State.' Such was the world into which Christianity came with its message of peace, its lofty morality, its beneficent service; and after enduring almost incredible persecutions, the triumphs it won are among the most signal in human history. And nowhere were these victories more marked than in the realm of social life.

Abolition of Slavery.

Slavery was the curse of the ancient world. Till the teaching of Christ infused a new spirit into human society nearly all nations practised the vice of ownership in human flesh. Much has been said of the liberties of Greece and Rome, but even there slavery prevailed to an appalling extent. 'By far the greater part of the inhabitants were not freemen, but slaves. In Athens, with 21,000 citizens, there were 40,000 slaves. At Rome it was common for a private citizen to have ten or twenty thousand slaves.' Their condition was

one of extreme hardship and suffering. They had few, if any, rights, and were under the absolute control of their owners. If a master was murdered in his own house all his slaves were liable to be killed. One noble Roman 'cast a slave into his fish-pond to feed his lampreys'; and another 'crucified a slave because in killing a wild boar of prodigious size he had used a weapon which only a freeman was permitted to use.' It was into such a world that the early Church brought her humane teachings, and exercised her emancipating and beneficent ministry. The great forces before which slavery fell were not political or military, but moral and spiritual. Before the Cross of Christ it vanished, 'as summer skies and melting currents consume the iceberg which has drifted down from Arctic coasts.' 'The Sermon on the Mount, God's affectionate and watchful Fatherhood of us all, the brotherhood of disciples, the common duty and the common immortality of rich and poor—these were the forces before which slavery inevitably fell.' Christianity and slavery cannot live long together, and as the former gathers force the latter disappears.

Domestic life has been purified and enriched beyond calculation, through the benign influence of Christian teaching and life. Much of the welfare and progress of any community depends on its home life. When that is peaceable and pure, and its obligations recognized and discharged, there is a sure guarantee of strength and

Home Life.

prosperity; and Christianity has ever shed its richest benediction on the home. It gives to woman her rightful place as man's companion, helper, friend, and neither his toy nor his slave. Pagan nations do not know what domestic happiness is. Among savages woman is uniformly degraded—the drudge of man. Even in Greece and Rome her condition was one of absolute subjection. Some of the most distinguished senators of Rome treated their wives with inhuman barbarity. In the lands of the East to-day her position is one of perpetual subjection. Confucius taught that she was under the rule of three obediences: 'In childhood to her father; in youth to her husband; in mature life, if her lord was dead, to her sons, or the nearest kinsman, or the sovereign.' It is Christianity that has given woman her rightful place in human society. Under the old Jewish law she had a place of honour unequalled among the nations of men; but it was under Christianity that the work was completed, and her legitimate claims fully secured. Christ found among women His most devoted disciples; the first convert to Christianity in Europe was a woman; and honourable women not a few 'swelled the roll of the early Church, and entered with efficiency and enthusiasm its varied spheres of Christian work.' And what a boon to the world this great emancipation has been! Human life has risen to a higher plane of purity and excellence in consequence. Libanus, the pagan tutor of Basil and Chrysostom, when he saw the mothers

Position of Woman.

and sisters of his pupils, exclaimed, 'What women these Christians have!' Christianity has given a new position to woman; and a regenerated womanhood can alone recreate human society. No finer proof of the beneficence of Christianity can be desired than that furnished by the new position of woman.

Christianity and Childhood.

And Christianity surrounds childhood with its strong protecting arms. One of the darkest blots on the life of the ancient world was its callousness to the claims of childhood, its cruelty to helpless infancy. The Canaanites 'made their children pass through the fire to Moloch'—offered them in sacrifice to their gods. In Athens and Rome children were frequently of deliberate purpose strangled or starved. The same horrible practice prevailed in heathen lands down to our own times. In *Missionary Enterprises in the South Seas*, by the distinguished missionary, John Williams, there are supplied terrible instances of the frightful prevalence of infanticide in those regions before the light of the Gospel revealed its hideous barbarity, and introduced its own humane principles and precepts. At a great gathering of school children, at one of the mission stations, banners had been prepared with such mottoes as these: 'What a blessing the Gospel is!' 'The children of England have sent us the Gospel;' 'Had it not been for the Gospel we should have been destroyed as soon as we were born.' At the sight of the banners an aged chief was profoundly moved, and in

impassioned tones exclaimed: 'Oh, that I had known that the Gospel was coming! I should then have saved my children, and they would have been among this happy group; but alas! I have destroyed them all; I have not one left.' Such has been the terrible condition of nations in almost all ages, until the Gospel has come. The Hebrews had many excellent precepts, and many excellent examples of the care and training of children; but the great indebtedness of the world to-day is to the benediction which Christ pronounced on the children. The picture of Christ taking 'the children in His arms and blessing them' has been a moral education to humanity; and His immortal words: 'Suffer the children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' have invested childhood with a sanctity never before possessed, but that can now never be destroyed; and have placed human duty to care for and train children on a moral and spiritual basis from which it can never again be removed. The service that Christianity has rendered to children entitles it to the admiration and acceptance of the world.

(3) THE PHILANTHROPIC INSTITUTIONS OF TO-DAY

It is extremely suggestive that in the palmiest days of Greece and Rome there was not a single 'house of mercy'—no hospitals, no orphanages, no almshouses, no provision for the speedy and charitable relief

of distressed humanity. There were magnificent temples reared to art, or politics, or literature, or to religion, such as it was; but no structure erected for the alleviation of human suffering, for lightening the burden of sorrow. Fabulous sums were spent in personal gratification and display; treasure was poured out like water on banquets and public games; but nothing for philanthropy. All for self, selfish ambitions and interest; nothing for the poor, the sick, the unfortunate, the helpless. 'Amid the splendour and magnificence of Greek and Roman cities we see no outbeamings of holy and ardent charity. There were temples and theatres, there were parks and palaces, there were groves and gardens, there were chariots and horses, there were diamonds and pearls, there were triumphal arches and lofty pillars, there were their costly shows of wild beasts and their gladiatorial exhibitions, there were their bridges and their baths, all great and marvellous things in their way, and patterns of splendour and magnificence; but in all this greatness and splendour nothing for the afflicted and the needy. Amid this endless profusion of wealth there was nothing devoted to the relief of suffering humanity.'[1]

What a contrast is seen where the truth of Christ is taught, and where Christianity rules the life and conduct of men. Jesus Christ inculcates as the highest human duty service for others; and wherever He controls men, philanthropic efforts and philanthropic

[1] *The Gospel Triumphant.*—J. BARKER.

institutions invariably arise. It is the honour and glory of our own land that it abounds in such institutions. The hospitals and infirmaries which are found in every town, and which are sustained mainly by voluntary contributions; the almshouses for the accommodation of the aged poor that private beneficence has provided; the orphanages for the care and training of children bereft of parents; the sanatoriums for the effective treatment of consumptives; children's hospitals, and many other institutions, meeting the special needs of special sections of the community—these are the products of Christian faith and life, the humanitarian fruit of the mind and example of Jesus Christ. By the side of its warehouses and manufactories, its marts of commerce and its halls of science, its schools and colleges, its art galleries and its literary institutions, a Christian people will ever place and sustain its philanthropic institutions — institutions that will express and embody the highest principles and impulses of philanthropy.

'The religion of Christ has ever breathed the spirit of ardent and universal benevolence into the hearts of His followers, and led them to employ their time, and wealth, and influence in endeavours to do good.' The world's greatest philanthropists have been almost uniformly Christian men and women; and their philanthropy has been the natural and appropriate fruit of the religion they professed.

These facts demonstrate, amply and conclusively

that Christianity is the greatest beneficent force the world has seen; and as its sway extends and its triumphs increase, it will more and more infuse into human life its own humane spirit, and into human conduct the graces of kindness and charity.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF WEALTH

CHAPTER IV

THE STEWARDSHIP OF WEALTH

PROBABLY there is nothing about which men are less disposed to acknowledge the fact of stewardship than the acquisition and distribution of wealth. They may take upon themselves a Christian profession, and yet fail entirely to recognize the authority of Christian teaching on the proper use of wealth; they may give their service to the cause of God, but they retain control of their money; they may join in the worship of the sanctuary, and yet never realize in any adequate way personal responsibility for the maintenance of public worship and Christian teaching; they may give a donation to some charitable object, but they give it in a formal and perfunctory fashion, without any realization that wealth is a trust, and without any conception of what real religious proportionate giving means. Possibly want of thought is more frequently the cause of this regrettable indifference than want of heart. The matter has never been definitely brought before

them; they have never given any thought to it; or if they have, the subject has been uncongenial, and has been promptly dismissed. They acknowledge responsibility for the right use of other talents—the wise use of time, the power of personal influence, the claim for individual service; but as to wealth, they seem to feel, if they do not say, 'May I not do what I will with mine own? My money is surely my own—the product of my own toil of brain or muscle, the fruit of my own energy, industry, aptitude, forethought; and may I not freely dispose of that as I will, without the control of any law, or the interference of any person?' Whether avowed or not, this attitude is tacitly assumed by large numbers in our Christian congregations. And yet few decisions are more unwise and unwarranted. Wealth is a talent, a trust; it is God's gift; and all the recipients of it are held accountable by Him for using it according to His law and claim. The principle of stewardship applies to wealth in relation to its acquisition, its retention, and the uses to which it is applied.

(1) THE ACQUISITION OF WEALTH

Not wrong to acquire Wealth.

It is not wrong to acquire wealth. If you have nothing it is not wrong to gain something; and if you have something it is not wrong to increase it. Everything depends on the conditions under which it is acquired. If gained in an honourable calling, by honourable means, and used for honourable ends,

it is not wrong to gain wealth. And it is not wrong for one man to be richer than another. Some men seem to have a natural aptitude for acquiring wealth. People say of them 'whatever they touch turns to gold.' It is a gift like poetry, or eloquence, or literary aptitude; and it may be used, like any other consecrated talent, for the glory of God and the weal of man. If a man has skill in conducting business concerns, if he has insight, judgment, tact, and allied therewith energy and persistence, patience and frugality, he is likely to acquire wealth, and wealth thus acquired may be the legitimate reward of merit; it may be fairly and honourably won. The Scriptures utter no condemnation of the honest accumulation of wealth, and in the Old Testament there are many commendations of the qualities which lead to it. 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings: he shall not stand before mean men' (Prov. xxii. 29). 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy fats shall overflow with new wine' (Prov. iii. 9, 10). In the New Testament the same great lessons of industry and fidelity are taught. 'In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit: serving the Lord' (Rom. xii. 11). Probably but few will accept Lord Bacon's affirmation that 'prosperity was the reward promised in the Old Testament and adversity in the New.' Our Lord's parables of the 'Talents' and the

Wealth a Trust.

Teaching of Scripture.

'Pounds' are full of instruction on the rewards that follow earnest, intelligent, faithful effort, and on the penalties that wait on carelessness, cowardice and incompetency. A 'faithful and wise servant' will use the opportunity of the hour; a 'wicked and slothful' one will 'bury his talent in a napkin.' 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich' (Prov. x. 4). And it is equally true that 'the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow therewith' (Prov. x. 22). Men's fidelity to God has often its initial reward here and now in benediction on 'basket and store.' What is urged is, that the acquisition of wealth must come under the law of stewardship, and that aptitude, opportunity, and success are God's gifts, to be gratefully received and wisely used.

Wealth, God's Gift.

Those are strong and striking words of the ancient law, and need to be impressed on the Christian men of to-day: 'Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth' (Deut. viii. 18). What the Scriptures condemn is unfair methods of securing wealth, excessive eagerness in pursuing it, and the blunted moral sensibilities that the unprincipled acquisition of it involves. It is the selfishness with which it is sought, the godlessness of the aims and methods of attaining it, that call forth the stern condemnation of Holy Writ. 'Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished'

(Prov. xiii. 11). 'If riches increase, set not thine heart thereon' (Ps. lxii. 10).

The one preventive against peril, when wealth increases, is to realize its stewardship. It is God's gift. His blessing has made it possible. His appointment is the tenure on which it is held. If we realize this, increasing wealth will not foster pride, or vanity, or self-conceit; it will be received with gratitude, not perhaps unmixed with fear; and it will be used with intelligence and discretion, with a due regard to the law of God and the claims of humanity. The prayer of Agur, the ancient philosopher, has much to commend it: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food needful for me: lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and use profanely the name of my God' (Prov. xxx. 8, 9).

The Prayer of Agur.

(2) THE RETENTION OF WEALTH

John Wesley's advice in regard to wealth was: 'Get all you can; save all you can; give all you can, which is all you have.' And he carried out to the full his own rule. Whilst giving away many thousands of pounds in charity, he lived in the humblest fashion, and when he died, he had but the barest necessaries and conveniences of life. Probably few of his most devoted followers will be prepared to accept his explanatory clause that giving 'all you can' means

John Wesley's Advice.

'all you have.' The broad outline of advice in that crisp sentence is, however, well worth adopting—'Get; save; give.'

There were men of wealth in the early times of Scripture history. Abraham was rich, but still devout and humble, considerate and manly. Nothing could be finer than his generous proposal to Lot when there was strife between their herdmen because of the scarcity of pasturage for their abundant flocks and herds: 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren' (Gen. xiii. 8). And few more courteous commercial transactions have ever occurred than his purchase of the cave of Machpelah for a burying-place for his wife Sarah (Gen. xxiii.). Abraham was rich, 'his substance was great'; but amid it all he retained simplicity of character, unselfishness of spirit, heroic faith.

Men of Wealth in Scripture History.

Abraham.

There are legitimate objects for which wealth may be retained. It may provide capital for commercial operations. Capital is essential to industrial operations, and the purposes of trade. Agriculture and commerce, mining and manufactures, buying and selling, all need capital, and cannot be carried on without it. It is capital that makes possible the employment of millions of men in the pursuits of agriculture, industry and commerce. It opens a market for

The Creation of Capital.

labour, and with labour, income by which the necessities, comforts, and pleasure of life can be obtained, and the obligations of life discharged. The stewardship of wealth is consistent with the prudent provision of the capital needed for the demands of industry and commerce.

Provision for the Future.

Provision for the future is also legitimate. 'If any provideth not for his own, and especially his own household, he hath denied the faith' (1 Tim. v. 8). Every sentiment of prudence, every dictate of personal and domestic duty, demands that some reasonable provision should be made for the contingencies of life. And this course in no way conflicts with a Christian's trust in a gracious Providence. Genuine trust is neither arrogant self-assurance nor gloomy foreboding. The more we exercise careful forethought, the less shall we be exposed to distressful anticipations of possible disasters. A reasonable provision for the future is therefore a legitimate use to which accumulating wealth may be applied. But it should be reasonable and not excessive; such as admits of the fullest discharge of present duty, and such as will foster and not benumb filial trust in God. Here a clear sense of stewardship will be an invaluable guide as to the proportion to be devoted to this purpose, and will help us to avoid the extremes of criminal thoughtlessness on the one hand, or of irrational timidity on the other.

And again, some provision for those who follow us in life may properly be made. 'Children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children' (2 Cor. xii. 14). The stewardship of wealth, therefore, does not prohibit some fair provision for those who follow us in the procession of life, and it may help us to a wise decision as to what that provision shall be—a point on which the gravest mistakes are sometimes made. Manifestly such provision should be in harmony with the past life, the training, the habits, and the present circumstances of those on whose behalf it is made. It certainly should include the best education, intellectual and moral, that can be obtained, and the best possible equipment for the mission of life, as well as such material wealth as circumstances may make possible or necessary. But inherited wealth is not always an unmixed good; sometimes it is an unmitigated curse; and occasionally men's success in life has been attributed to the energy and effort that the narrow circumstances of their earlier years compelled them to put forth. Accumulated wealth is held by an uncertain tenure. Easily got, it sometimes easily goes. How often it has happened, while one generation acquires it, the next keeps it, and the third squanders it. 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth' (Lam. iii. 27). If life is made too easy, it may be blighted as effectually as if made too hard. In any case, a sense of the stewardship of wealth will help

Heritage for our Children.

to a wise solution of a difficult problem, and while recognizing other just claims will give due weight to this.

(3) THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

A first charge on income is what is necessary to meet personal and family expenses. That is too obvious to need comment, though the caution may be necessary that such expenditure should be reasonable, and not extravagant; that it should be well within the income; that it should never be influenced by a desire for display, or to excite envy in others; and that it should be on a scale that permits the dedication of a definite and ample portion to God. Stewardship in the use of wealth is not limited to the rich, but applies equally to men in every station of life. It has an emphatic message for men of large means, but the obligation to recognize it begins the moment we have any income at all. If men wait till they are rich before they begin to give, they will not be likely ever to begin. Habits of economy and penuriousness easily harden into avarice, and the usages and methods of half a lifetime are difficult to change. Stewardship begins with earliest possession of material resources, and it goes on to the end of life. It will only end when the great Proprietor calls for an account of each man's life.

Stewardship common to all.

Let us take an example, which is typical of the experience of thousands. A man begins life with

limited means, but he acknowledges the obligation of stewardship. He sets aside out of his small income a definite portion—say one-tenth —to be given to the cause of God. He gives, according to method instead of from impulse, constantly instead of occasionally'; he gives 'proportionately a definite portion of income, instead of a chance and undefined sum.' He thus recognizes God as the proprietor and himself as a steward; what he has, he has received, and even of his gifts he says: 'Of Thine own have I given Thee' (1 Chron. xxix. 14). Suppose such a man prospers in life—a probable result. The habit of giving to God on clear and definite principles helps him to order and method in life generally; the motive will be associated with qualities likely to lead to success—intelligence, forethought, economy; and 'the blessing of God which maketh rich' will rest upon him. That blessing is a subtle, mystic force, which cannot be weighed or measured, but is real and mighty and beneficent, and which can baffle all the materialistic calculations of men, and crown human effort with abundant success. Some men seem to imagine that 'giving' impoverishes. This is the greatest mistake. It enriches. 'There is that scattereth and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to want. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself' (Prov. xi. 24, 25). 'The liberal deviseth liberal things, and in liberal things shall he continue' (Isa. xxxii. 8).

Example.

Giving to God neither prevents nor retards the accumulation of wealth; it often immensely helps it. To regard a generous gift as so much lost is to totally misapprehend its nature and effect. It is rather the depositing of good seed in good soil that will bear fruit manyfold. A noble gift is a living thing that will multiply in the greatly enlarged resources of the giver. It is like the handful of corn that, cast into the ground, seems to be thrown away; and yet it produces the teeming harvest. And so our friend, despite his giving, perhaps because of it, prospers in the world; and as he gives proportionately to income, his gifts continually increase. And if he has a true perception of stewardship in its highest sense, not only will the *actual* amount of his gifts increase, but also the *proportion* will share the same gracious expansion. The tenth will enlarge to a seventh or a fifth of all his income as the sense of stewardship becomes more real and dominant in life and service. While two shillings in the pound fairly met responsibility in the smaller income of earlier days, it must now be increased to three shillings, or four or five in every pound to equal the generosity of those earlier days, and to fitly express the gratitude and devotion of to-day.

Let us further suppose that our imaginary friend has secured a competency. All reasonable provision has been made for the contingencies of life: capital for his business, fair provision for the future, a sufficient heritage for his children. What shall he do now?

What does stewardship dictate? There are three courses possible in these conditions.

There is retirement. He may leave his business to others, retire from active life to a well-earned repose, and enjoy the fruits of his industry in a quiet, restful Sabbath of life. And he may use his greater leisure for more active service in the cause of Christ and humanity. And if there be declining health and increasing infirmities, none can complain of release from the exacting claims of business life.

Retirement.

Or he may seek further accumulation of wealth for the pleasure of possessing it. With some men the acquisition of wealth is a passion. It is an intense pleasure to gain it, and an equal pleasure to keep it. They hoard for hoarding's sake. Their satisfaction is to possess. If, however, a man's life has been controlled by a sense of stewardship, this cannot be his ideal. Is there not another alternative? Assuming undiminished health and vigour, with no decay in power of initiative or application, why should not such a man carry on his business entirely for the Lord's cause, giving to it all the energy and attention of earlier days, and consecrating its entire proceeds to the cause of Christ and humanity. Is not that an ideal worth realizing? Would not that be the highest exemplification of stewardship? And who can doubt but that the benediction of Heaven would rest upon such a proceeding? What would be its

Hoarding.

Giving.

probable results if carried out even on a limited scale? It could not fail to enrich the religious life of the man himself. He would feel that his entire life was consecrated to God, even the details of business would be sanctified by the high purpose to which its proceeds were devoted. Self would be entirely superseded in the supreme object of serving God and humanity by the product of his industry. And what an object lesson it would be to the world! The critical eyes of men would readily detect the true inwardness of such a procedure as this. While other men add 'house to house, and land to land,' our friend gives himself with equal energy to the business of his life, but solely to serve others. He gains, not to spend or hoard, but to give; and in acting thus he would exhibit an example of unselfish devotion to the highest interests of humanity that must command respect and admiration of men, and that must appeal powerfully and persuasively to the noblest impulses of the human heart. And it could not fail to immensely increase the contributions available for Christly work. If a man retires from active business life, solely or mainly on account of having acquired a competency, he will probably be in the fulness of his powers, and at the height of his prosperity. The proceeds of a few years' successful business then would mean much. If this plan were adopted on any large scale, few perhaps could forecast the magnificent results which must follow: the languishing institutions of philanthropy would be

everywhere quickened, the drooping hands of faithful toilers held up, the appeals of need, ignorance and distress responded to, and a new era of sympathetic service dawn on the human race. Perhaps no more fitting words can close this chapter than those in which the patriarch Job vindicates his integrity, and at the same time draws a most attractive picture of wealth consecrated to the service of humanity:

> When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
> And when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me:
> Because I delivered the poor that cried,
> The fatherless also, that had none to help him.
> The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:
> And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
> I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:
> My justice was as a robe and a diadem.
> I was eyes to the blind,
> And feet was I to the lame.
> I was a father to the needy;
> And the cause that I knew not I searched out.
> And I brake the jaws of the unrighteous,
> And plucked the prey out of his teeth.
>
> (Job xxix. 11-17.)

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER V

THE TITHE

THE origin of the tithe — the dedication of one-tenth of income to the service of God—is hidden in remote antiquity. It seems evident that this institution has come down to us from prehistoric times. An American writer observes: 'The ordained law of the giving of the tithe is a law which was not made for the Jews, but was enjoined about two thousand years before Abraham was born—a law that is as old as the institution of sacrifice, as old as the institution of the Sabbath, and as universal as the human race—a law that could as justly be called *heathen* as *Jewish*, for its binding force is recognized to-day in every heathen country, and it stands out unmistakably as one of the landmarks which leads the nations back to a common origin and a divine revelation—a law which, be it said to our shame, is observed in every heathen nation, and is violated only by those who call themselves Christians.[1] It is thus clear that the

Origin of the Tithe.

[1] *Methods of Church Work*, Stall., p. 171.

tithe must date from the creation or soon after, and there seems abundant reason to infer that it was the subject of divine revelation to mankind. The one lesson which God has unceasingly impressed upon man from the beginning is, that He, and He alone, is the great proprietor of all things, and that His human creatures are stewards; dependent entirely on His bounty, receiving their all from His hands, and accountable to Him for the use made of it. And in recognition of this paramount and universal claim, the tenth has been demanded and given from the beginning — the tribute of the creature to the Creator, the acknowledgement of divine ownership on the one hand, and of human stewardship on the other. The prevalence of the tithe amongst so many nations, so diverse and so distant, gives support to the contention that it originated with the human race, or whilst it remained one family; and that as each branch separated from the others, and took its own place on the surface of the earth, it carried with it the knowledge and the obligation of this ancient institution; and by tradition and continual observance handed it on in undiminished authority from one generation to another. Men everywhere have recognized this obligation of giving one-tenth to God as the owner of all things.

The divine Claim.

The method in which the question of the tithe is introduced in Scripture history gives countenance and emphasis to this claim. It does not come

before us in the form of a new enactment, the revelation of a new law then for the first time given, but as an enactment previously in existence, as already in operation, and which is simply recognized and observed. It is assumed as one of those elementary, fundamental principles of religious life and worship which belong to humanity as a whole, and which it is a first duty to acknowledge and obey. The chief references to the tithe in sacred Scripture gather about three of the most illustrious names in Hebrew History: Abraham, Jacob, and Moses.

First Reference in Scripture.

ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

The interview between these two remarkable men brings before us one of the most interesting incidents of Old Testament history. 'Chedorlaomer and his confederate kings make war on the King of Sodom and his associates, and prevail in battle. The victors seize upon the persons and goods of the vanquished, and with them of Lot and his goods, and proceed with them to their own country. Abram, hearing of his nephew's captivity, arms his dependents, probably few in number compared with those against whom they went, overtakes them on their return, defeats them, and recovers Lot and all the persons and goods that had been carried off. To God he owes his victory, and to God is due an acknowledgement of His aid. Accordingly, returning, he meets God's

Abram and Melchizedek.

high priest, and to him he pays a tenth of all the spoils.'[1]

Such is the impressive incident which, for the first time in sacred history, illustrates the usage and obligation of giving one-tenth to God. Abram, as the heroic rescuer, was fairly entitled to some share in the recovered booty; and this the King of Sodom desired him to take. He, however, positively refuses to accept anything for himself, and with characteristic independence and magnanimity declares to the rescued king, 'I will not take anything that is thine.' But he will not ignore God's claim—a claim resting probably on direct revelation from God, and certainly on immemorial usage — of one-tenth; and, that secured, the rest is returned to its original owners.

Abram gives tithes to Melchizedek.

Of Melchizedek, King of Salem, king of righteousness, we know little. He was 'the priest of the Most High God' (Gen. xiv.); he was 'made like unto the Son of God' (Heb. vii. 3); and he was the model of the permanent priesthood of the Great Intercessor, 'made a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (Heb. vii. 17). His personality flits across the stage of history like a stream of light, and we know neither whence he came nor whither he went. He pronounced a benediction on the head of the founder of the Hebrew race: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed

[1] *Gold and the Gospel*, p. 26.

be God Most High which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand' (Gen. xiv. 19, 20). And he received from Abram 'tithes of all,' and received them with sacred symbols, 'bread and wine,' as 'the priest of the Most High God.'

Abram, perhaps equally illustrious, is much better known to us. He was called of God to leave his country to found a nation in whom 'all the nations of the earth' were to be 'blessed'; and he obeyed and became 'the father of the faithful' and 'the friend of God.' He was the distinguished progenitor of many nations, but especially of one to whom should come the messengers and 'oracles of God'; and through whom the great purposes of redemption by Jesus Christ should be accomplished. And Abram, the most conspicuous religious figure of that age, gave tithes to Melchizedek, 'the priest of the Most High God.' The act was a distinctly religious one; it was the recognition of a divine claim, the acknowledgement of a great deliverance, the expression of the devotion, gratitude, and obedience of a just, generous, noble man. The lesson seems clear and impressive—God has a right to the 'tithe.' All the prizes of victory, all the proceeds of industry and commerce, all the gains of professional life, all the revenue from accumulated investments, owe this acknowledgement of the 'tithe' to God; and that obligation can only be discharged when it can be said of the possessor of each, as of Abram, 'he gave tithes of all.'

JACOB AND HIS VOW

Under widely different circumstances, Jacob, the most distinguished descendant of Abram, recognized the same obligation of the 'tithe.' Jacob was calm, calculating, crafty; and in any business negotiation was much more than a match for his bold and impulsive brother, Esau. In consequence of an act of deception and over-reaching, Jacob was driven from home to escape the threatened revenge of the brother he had so deeply wronged. On the first night of his journey from Canaan to Padanaram, as he rested on the ground, with stones for his pillow, God appeared to him in a remarkable dream. He saw 'a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it' (Gen. xxviii. 12). Fresh from his sin, God met him in mercy and grace. The very wrong of which he had been guilty became the occasion of a great revelation that changed and elevated all his future life. He readily learnt the gracious lessons of that unique visitation. He had sinned, and sinned deeply, but the infinite Father has not cast him off. Pardon and restoration were possible yet. The 'ascending' angels might convey to Heaven the plea for forgiveness, and the 'descending' angels bring to the stricken spirit a message of hope. All the possibilities of a worthy life were not quite forfeited; and despite past sin, wrongs might be

Jacob at Bethel.

rectified and life made pure, noble, good, after all. God said to Jacob: 'I will be with thee and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land' (Gen. xxviii. 15); and Jacob 'vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go . . . then shall the Lord be my God . . . and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth to thee' (Gen. xxviii. 20-22).

The Tithe promised.

This event proved to be one of profound significance in Jacob's life. He rose from his couch at Bethel a new man, with new ideals of life, and under the sway of new and nobler impulses. God had now come into all his thoughts for the present, and all his plans for the future; and in all the transactions of his coming life the claim of God is to be acknowledged, and the tithe gladly given to Him. It is not in the spirit of selfish bargain, but in that of grateful recognition, that this pledge is given. The divine promise of guidance and defence comes first; the dedication of the tenth is in response to that promise, and comes after. If this unwritten but universal law has, up to that time, been ignored, Jacob resolves that it shall be so no longer, and that of all he acquires in the future God's tithe shall be given. In the case of Abram it was a single definite act, though it was probably typical of a habit; in Jacob's case it was a vow for all the future, a great guiding principle that should control the income of all coming time. The

tithe is thus to be given, not merely at the time of some signal deliverance, or on the receipt of some special blessing, but at all times and under all circumstances — the recognition of an obligation, personal, imperative, and permanent. Is there not much instruction of vast importance to the Christian Church in these incidents? Abram gave a tenth, Jacob gave a tenth, and manifestly in each case in obedience to a known law. Can Christians give less and be blameless? Does not this law apply to us to-day in the apportionment of our gifts to the cause of God?

MOSES AND THE JEWISH TITHE

Now, what had evidently existed from remote antiquity and passed down the ages by tradition became in the time of Moses definitely enacted in Jewish law. This ancient practice was then given legal form and force, with the addition of a definite object to which it was to be applied. The method in which it was promulgated indicates this: 'all the tithe . . . it is the Lord's' (Lev. xxvii. 30). The use of the present tense indicates a definite fact, known and acknowledged, but now receiving the added force of a precise and authoritative law. The same authority that gave the sanction of law to the Sabbath, though it had been proclaimed at Creation itself, equally gave the sanction of law to the tithe, an obligation of not much later date. The Jewish tithe seems to have embraced three sections.

There was 'the first tithe.' 'All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, it is the Lord's' (Lev. xxvii. 30). The Jews were an agricultural people, so that 'the seed of the land' and 'the fruit of the tree' practically represented all property; and of this, God claimed one-tenth. How explicit is this law! The obligation is stated in the most precise terms. The proportion is not left to impulse, or caprice, or individual preference, but is definitely fixed: one-tenth. It is so clear that the humblest intelligence can grasp it; so simple that no elaborate calculations are necessary to discover it; so definite that none but the wilfully blind could fail to apprehend it, or the wilfully perverse to ignore it. How comprehensive its scope! 'All the tithe of the land.' Nothing is excluded from the application of this law. As all that men have is God's gift, so every part should yield its 'tithe' to the bountiful Giver. The product of mind and muscle, of tact and energy, of forethought and industry—all must bear its proportion of a common claim. How universal its obligation! None are exempt from it. The richest must give his tenth, and the poorest must not withhold it; the years of ample harvests and abounding prosperity must yield their full quota, and the periods of dearth and scarcity must give their share. The proportion is fixed, but the actual amount will be

The First Tithe.

1. Explicit.

2. Comprehensive.

3. Universal.

determined by the abundance or scarcity of the annual produce—an arrangement at once just, wise, and equitable. How religious its object! The tithe was devoted to the maintenance of the ministers of religion. It was given to the Levites. In the division of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, no portion of the land was assigned to that tribe, except the Levitical cities and their suburbs, which were scattered over the country. As the ministers of religion of that age and people, it was necessary that they should be relieved from secular duties, and located in places accessible to the people in every part of the land; and to provide for their maintenance the tithe of the produce of all the other divisions of the land was assigned to them, and this became their inheritance in Israel. The tithe was not thus a matter of generosity on the part of the other tribes, but was the Levites' legal right, a right that could not be withheld without gross breach of divine law, and grave neglect of religious duty (Numb. xviii. 20-24). And then, in their turn, the Levites must pay to Aaron and his sons and successors tithes of the tithes which they received from the nation at large. No class in Israel was exempt from the obligation of the tithe. The Levites, who live by the altar, must devote, like the rest of the nation, one-tenth of their income to the service of religion. Their sacred calling does not free them from this law; it rather gives force and emphasis to it. The

4. Religious.

The Levites' Tithe.

more exalted the position, the greater the obligation to be a pattern of cheerful and conscientious obedience to the law of God and the claims of men.

Then there was a 'second tithe.' 'Thou shalt surely tithe all the increase of thy seed, that cometh forth of the field year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, of thine oil, of the firstlings of thy herd and of thy flock; that thou mayest learn to fear thy God alway' (Deut. xiv. 22, 23). This is manifestly a different tithe from the first one. 'That was given for the support of the Levites; this for the maintenance of the various feasts and sacrifices.' The two tithes would therefore constitute, at least, one-fifth of the yearly income of every Jew, which by permanent statute he was required to give to the service of God.

The Second Tithe.

Then, again, every third year there was the 'charity tithe.' 'At the end of every three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase in the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest' (Deut. xiv. 28, 29). This constituted a further claim on the income of the patriotic Hebrew,

The Charity Tithe.

and yet it was in perfect harmony with the drift of Mosaic law on the use of wealth. The entire system of Mosaic law was calculated and intended to discourage selfishness, covetousness and oppression; to commend humane feelings and kindly deeds; and to show that human life and human welfare are more important in God's sight than the acquisition and retention of wealth. The provisions of the law of the Jubilee year afford ample evidence of this. Then, forfeited estates reverted to their original owners, debts were cancelled and prisoners released. And it would not be out of accord with the general tone of Mosaic law if the 'charity tithe' were an additional claim for the gracious objects of philanthropy. The Jew was never allowed to forget his obligation to God and to needy humanity. Every year the claim for the 'tithe' emphasized the claim of God, not only to a definite portion of his income, but to what his tenth was intended to represent and express—his fidelity, devotion, trust, obedience. And every third year, there were brought home to him the claims of humanity—the widow, the stranger, the fatherless. He was taught that no man liveth to himself, that all human creatures are members one of another, that the possession of material wealth carries with it a great privilege and a grave responsibility, and that it must not be employed in mere personal gratification, but in promoting the objects of religion and philanthropy.

It is much to be regretted that this law of tithe, so clearly enunciated in Holy Scripture, so easy in its operation, so beneficent in its results, should ever have been allowed to lapse into disuse, as an arrangement for the regular and efficient maintenance of the institutions of religion, and for meeting the ever-present and ever-pressing claims of humanity. Every reason that existed in ancient times for the giving of the tenth to God exists with increased urgency to-day; every claim for the tithe which could be pressed on the Jew can be pressed with much greater emphasis on the Christian; and every motive of love and fidelity which prompted the devout Hebrew to bring 'all his tithes' into the divine 'storehouse' presses with increased force on the Christian Gentile. Men still share in the free, abundant, unmerited gifts of God; human nature still needs the refining, elevating influences of religious worship, instruction and fellowship; the claims of the poor and the distressed are not less urgent now than then; and the great obligation to send the message of salvation to the heathen world rests upon us to-day as it never rested upon the Jewish Church. The fuller light of the gospel of Christ, the clearer revelation of the Father's infinite love, the richer heritage of spiritual privilege on which we have entered in this last dispensation have not lessened — have they not immensely increased our obligation to glorify God by the

The Tithe a Law for To-day.

large and liberal, the regular and religious consecration to Him of our material wealth? Carried over into this new dispensation—the dispensation of the Spirit—enriched with the glow of an intense Christian enthusiasm, and consecrated to the sublime objects for which Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again, the practice of the tithe, universally, would be an incalculable benediction to the Church and the world. And no reform of church life gives promise of more beneficent results, or opens out vaster possibilities of service, than the systematic and proportionate consecration of the Church's wealth to the service of God and humanity. The revival of the 'tithe' would mean new life to the Church itself, new vigour to all its agencies and institutions, and new hope for the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE JEWISH FREE-WILL OFFERINGS

THE tithe was undoubtedly the general law of the Jewish nation, but this by no means exhausted the amount of the gifts of the Jew to the cause of God and humanity. What was the exact claim on his resources for the varied sacrifices which he offered, and the periodical journeys to Jerusalem to take part in the great national and religious festivals of his time, which every devout and patriotic Jew was expected to make, it may not be easy to fully estimate, but that it was considerable cannot be questioned. The sacrifices were symbolic of great religious facts, and taught important spiritual truths; and their regular observance, no doubt, helped to foster the spirit of devotion; but that they laid the resources of the worshipper under constant and costly tribute is certain. The 'burnt offering,' the 'meat offering,' the 'sin offering,' the 'peace offering'—all had their place and their uses in the Mosaic economy, and all helped to emphasize the reality and urgency of God's claim on the fidelity,

devotion, and consecration of His people; and together they made demands by no means small. But there was still another great outstanding feature in the national and religious life of the Hebrews, 'the free-will offerings' of the people. These were voluntary contributions on special occasions, glad thank-offerings for special mercies; they were gifts not legally appointed, and not under the constraint of any legal obligation, but were the joyous offerings of gratitude and devotion to meet some great religious need and serve some great religious purpose. The main occasions of these gifts from the 'willing' hearts of the people gather about the erection of the tabernacle, and the building of the temple, with its renovation under King Joash, and its rebuilding under Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerubbabel and others.

THE ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE

This event was one of profound importance to the religious growth and education of the Hebrew people. They had just been emancipated from the bondage of Egypt, and were on their way to the land of promise. It was essential to the best interests of their newly-organized national existence that the institutions of divine worship should be created, sacrifices and services definitely arranged, and the laws of the nation's moral and religious life clearly announced; and hence the tabernacle, as the centre and symbol of the nation's

worship, was erected. God revealed to Moses, 'in the mount,' 'the pattern' of that remarkable structure that for five hundred years represented all that was purest and noblest in the religious life of Israel. The work was carried out by the proceeds of the 'free-will offerings' of the people. 'Moses assembled all the congregation of Israel' and made his appeal to them: 'Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord.' Their co-operation was invited, but they were not coerced. 'Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, the Lord's offering; gold and silver and brass,' etc. (Ex. xxxv. 4-9). All were invited to share in the work. The poor, out of their poverty, might bring something, and the rich, out of their abundance, the larger and more costly gifts. For the purpose in hand many and varied contributions were needed, but everything was free from constraint. The spirit of the giver was of more importance than the magnitude of the gift. The work was one in which all had a real and abiding personal interest, and a work, therefore, to which each one might consider it an honour to contribute; but emphasis is laid on a 'willing mind.' Each had shared in the bountiful gifts of God, and hence each may bring his 'free-will offering' to the Lord. 'And all the congregation of Israel departed from the presence of Moses' (v. 20). There was no hurry; no giving from mere momentary impulse, or as the result of some fervid appeal. It was to be matter of conscience, reason, heart; a subject for thought,

consultation, prayer; an act of intelligence, gratitude, devotion. And the response was prompt, general and enthusiastic. 'They came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and brought the Lord's offering' (v. 21). 'Both men and women came.' The men 'brought blue and purple and scarlet,' 'an offering of silver and brass'; and the women brought 'jewels of gold—brooches and earrings, and signet-rings and armlets'; and they 'did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue and the purple, and the scarlet and the fine linen' (v. 25). 'And the rulers brought onyx stones, and the stones to be set for the ephod and the breast-plate' (v. 27). And with the gifts were speedily forthcoming the skilled workmen needed to fashion the tabernacle, one of the most remarkable structures ever erected. And as the impulse of generosity continued, Moses declared: 'The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make; and he issued a proclamation to restrain the people from giving.' Such is this remarkable incident in the early national life of the Ḥebrew race—an incident full of interest and instruction to all succeeding generations of religious men.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

The building of the temple marked a further step in the development of the religious life of the Jews.

The movable tabernacle was superseded by the temple, projected and prepared for by David, but erected by his son and successor, Solomon. It enshrined the same ideas as the tabernacle, and served the same great purposes, only on a wider scale, and in a more permanent form. The one was 'adapted to an unsettled people and a toilsome journey, the other to a state of tranquillity and national prosperity'; but in each case the same spirit of unstinted generosity to the cause of God was manifested.

David, King of Israel, was one of the great figures in Hebrew history. His military genius freed the nation from the harassing attacks of their ancient foes, the Philistines, and gave it a position of power and dominion it has never previously attained. His splendid devotional poetry has laid all succeeding ages under a debt of deepest obligation. But his most prominent characteristic was his love for the house of God; and his most illustrious achievement in connection therewith was the preparation which he made, on the largest and most generous scale, for its erection. He was extremely desirous that the house should be 'exceeding magnifical of fame and of glory throughout all countries,' worthy in every way of the Great God that was to be worshipped therein, and of the loyalty and resources of the nation that would erect it. And he proceeded about the matter in a way likely to secure the enthusiastic co-operation of the entire people. 'And David

assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that served the king by course, and the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, and the rulers over all the substance and possessions of the king, and of his sons with the officers, and the mighty men, even all the mighty men of valour, unto Jerusalem' (1 Chron. xxviii. 1). To that great representative assembly David disclosed the supreme ambition of his life: 'To build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord' (v. 2), and he invited their fullest co-operation in the stirring appeal: 'Who then offereth willingly to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord' (1 Chron. xxix. 5). 'Then the princes of the fathers, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands, and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly' (v. 6). And 'the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly . . . and David, the king, also rejoiced with great joy' (v. 9). The response to the king's appeal was immediate, and ample and enthusiastic. The leaders of the nation nobly led in this great national movement, and the people willingly followed. All had their part, and each did his share. 'All the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers.' The occasion was one of free, glad, united, spontaneous giving on the part of an entire people. David said: 'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold . . . silver . . . brass . . . iron . . . onyx

stones, precious stones and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, also, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, seeing that I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, I give it unto the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house' (1 Chron. xxix. 2, 3).

And the conclusion of these proceedings was in complete accord with the commencement. 'David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said, Blessed be Thou, O Lord the God of Israel, our Father for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and the earth is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou rulest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee' (v. 10-14).

This was the spirit in which this unique work was undertaken. It recognized God as the Giver of all, and man as a steward, into whose hands earthly treasure had been entrusted; and it offered to God willingly, of His own, for the erection of the house where His name should be recorded, and His worship celebrated for many generations. This erection of

the temple forms a great landmark in the religious education and development of the Hebrew race, and is well worth the study and the emulation of devout men in every subsequent age. The buoyancy and enthusiasm with which the work was done, and the willingness and spontaneity of the giving, teach lessons of immense value to all time.

THE RENOVATION OF THE TEMPLE UNDER KING JOASH

During those dark days in the history of the kingdom of Judah, when the pernicious influence of the house of Ahab dominated the court and government of that kingdom, the temple was allowed to lapse into ruinous neglect. One of the first duties of the young king, Joash, was to attempt the renovation of the temple, the centre of national worship. Here again the 'free-will offerings' of the people were invited to provide what was needful for the work. The first step towards real national progress was the re-arrangement of the services and sacrifices of the sanctuary. Hence the chief priest 'made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the Lord,' and invited the people to offer their gifts. 'And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in and cast into the chest until they had made an end. And it was so, that at what time the chest was brought into the king's office, by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the chief priests'

officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to its place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance' (2 Chron. xxiv. 8-12). The work was done with tact and judgment; public confidence was restored, religious enthusiasm awakened, and generous gifts followed; and then the renovation of the house of the Lord was undertaken and completed.

THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE AFTER THE CAPTIVITY

The condition and resources of the people when the second temple was built were in marked contrast with their condition and resources when the first was erected. The palmy days of the national life of the Hebrews were during the reign of David and Solomon. At that time they possessed wider dominion and vaster resources than at any period of their history, before or after. The first temple was thus built when the nation was on the highest plane of power and prosperity that it ever reached. When the second temple was erected there was but a remnant of the people, and they returned from a prolonged period of captivity, and in anything but affluent circumstances. And yet, under the heroic leadership of Ezra, Zerubbabel and others, and the inspiring appeals of Haggai and other prophets, the house of the Lord was rebuilt. Its general appearance was in striking contrast to the magnificent temple of Solomon. 'Who is left among you that saw this house in its former

glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing?' Such is Haggai's plaintive inquiry. And yet this contrast must be no excuse for slackness or indifference. 'Yet now be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts' (Hag. ii. 3, 4). The discouraged people are taught that God has all resources—'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, said the Lord of hosts;' that mere architectural magnificence in the house of God is not everything; and that the latter and humbler house may share in a richer benediction than ever visited the former and costlier edifice—'I will fill this house with glory; the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts' (v. 7-9). And so the people responded to the appeal, 'they offered willingly for the house of God to set it up in its place: they gave after their ability into the treasury of the work' (Ezra ii. 68, 69).

Such was the 'free-will offering' of the ancient and chosen race. It was supplementary to the statutory tithe, and yet it was an obligation that could not be neglected without blame. The prophet Malachi asks in terms of strong remonstrance: 'Will a man rob God?' And in grave censure the accusation is made by the 'Lord of hosts'—'Yet ye rob me—in tithes and offerings' (iii. 8). Both are placed in the same category as moral obligations that cannot be ignored without guilt. They are claims to which God had a right; to withhold them was a serious

offence; to freely offer them brought glory to God, and abiding joy to man.

The application of this great duty to modern church life is clear and direct. To each believer there come times of special help and blessing demanding the special recognition of some thank-offering to God. Recovery from sickness, deliverance from grave peril, an exceptional measure of material prosperity, unclouded domestic life—these all may be fitly acknowledged by some appropriate gift to religion and philanthropy. And such occasions occur in the history of all churches. Great epochs must be honoured and celebrated by great gifts. The stones carried by the Israelites from the bed of the Jordan as the tribes passed over were to be 'for a memorial' of a great deliverance; and memorials will still be raised, by devout and generous men, of the great historic events in the churches to which they belong, and will testify alike to their appreciation of the splendid traditions of the past, to their fidelity to the duties of the present, and to their alertness to the magnificent opportunities of the future.

Present-day Applications.

Few things have been more remarkable in the history of Christian liberality than the splendid outburst of generosity with which the Free Churches of this land have celebrated the entrance of the twentieth century of the Christian era. The magnificent 'Million Guinea Fund' of the Wesleyan

Twentieth Century Funds.

Methodist Church has been the wonder and admiration of all the churches, and of the country at large. That this church, in addition to maintaining in full efficiency all its organizations and institutions, at an annual cost of probably two million pounds, should add another million to its gifts for this special celebration, is one of the greatest triumphs of the voluntary principle in the maintenance of religion that our age has seen, and is, in fact, full of hope and inspiration for the work of the future. The Congregational 'Twentieth Century Fund' reached the splendid total of £525,000. The fund of the Baptist Churches reached £250,000; and that of the United Methodist Free Church £105,000. These are remarkable figures, and will make the early years of the twentieth century memorable in the history of Christian giving.

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

CHAPTER VII

INCIDENTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

ONE of the principles of the moral government of the world, both on its human and divine side, is that privilege brings responsibility and is the measure of it. 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more' (Luke xii. 48). In passing from the old dispensation to the new, we move from a lower to a higher plane both of privilege and responsibility; and therefore, whatever moral obligations rested on men in Old Testament times, must, because of fuller light and wider opportunity, rest with increased force on men in New Testament times. The application of this principle to the question of 'giving' in Christian times seems clear and indisputable. 'It would be strange indeed if it were otherwise; strange if in the darker day and the less favoured Church a greater return was either expected or made. It is not thus that God deals with men. The day of

increased privilege is ever that of increased responsibility, and the season of bounty is also that of gratitude.' In the dispensation of the Spirit, we may surely expect richer and ampler fruits of the 'grace' of giving, as of every other grace, than have ever been produced in the earlier and less favoured ages of men.

We have seen that the Jew gave 'tithes' and 'free-will offerings.' The tithe has no official re-enactment in the New Testament. It evidently occupies the same position as the Sabbath, whose existence is assumed, and whose obligation has passed over from the old dispensation to the new. In considering the teachings and incidents of the New Testament, we are in the region and atmosphere of moral rather than statutory law, of spiritual privilege and duty rather than dry, formal enactment.

THE WIDOW'S MITE

'And He sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they which are casting into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living' (Mark xii. 41-44). In this extremely interesting

incident of our Lord's public ministry we have a flood of light thrown on His estimate of giving. We ask *what is given;* He regards *what is left.* We are impressed with the amount of the gift; He more highly values the spirit that prompts it. Our eye rests on the large gifts of the wealthy; His is at once arrested by the 'two mites' of the widow, and while He does not fail to note the large offerings of the rich, the widow's gift outweighs all.

As Christ sat over against the treasury He saw the worshippers presenting their gifts. The wealthy gave of their abundance, their superfluity. It involved no sacrifice; they could spare it without feeling it; it was not improper, and it was not condemned, but it was destitute of that supreme quality of sacrifice which invests with such interest and attractiveness a much smaller gift. By the side of these wealthy contributors there comes a poor widow. She has little with which to replenish the Lord's treasury, and yet she has much that wins the Lord's approval. Her contribution will make no appreciable increase in the proceeds of the day, but her fidelity, her devotion, her spirit of self-sacrifice have made that scene memorable in all Christian history. She cast into the treasury 'two mites,' which make a farthing. Probably it passed entirely unnoticed by her fellow-worshippers; but one eye saw it, read the motive that inspired it, estimated it at its true worth, and passed on it the

What Christ saw.

highest eulogy that ever described and honoured any human contribution to the treasury of God.

Calling the attention of His disciples to the scene, our Lord points out to them two impressive contrasts: (1) In the amount of the gifts. The rich cast in much. They are not represented as niggardly, grudging givers. They gave large donations. Judged by a mere financial standard, the 'two mites' of the poor widow were utterly insignificant beside them. Their gifts were large, hers small. (2) In the motive that prompted them. No condemnation is uttered of these rich contributors. They were apparently ordinary religious people, with no special outstanding features, and the point of contrast comes in when their ordinary gifts are placed beside the poor widow's extraordinary self-sacrifice. They had given 'of their superfluity,' she had given 'all her living.' Our Lord sets the motive in its true, clear light. Ordinary motives operating on ordinary men on ordinary occasions accounted for the 'much' cast into the treasury by the rich; but only the strongest spiritual impulse could lead a poor widow to give 'all her living'; and on this account she gave 'more than they all,' and received this high commendation from our Lord's lips.

What Christ said.

And Christ still sits over the treasury and notes the contributions cast therein. What His estimate of our gifts is we may in some measure infer from this incident. It is the giving which costs that

counts with Him. Someone has suggested a new institution in church arrangements — 'a self-acting collecting-plate, that by an automatic action would throw off whatever Christ did not accept. How threepenny-pieces, given as now to appear among "the silver" people, would fly about!' Are we not more influenced by what men think of our gifts than by what Christ thinks? And are we not indifferent as to whether Christ sees our niggardliness, if only men don't detect it. How different in amount and spirit would our gifts be if the dominating consideration was: 'What would Christ approve?' Christ still sits over against the treasury, and rightly measures what is placed therein.

How often, too, are the widow's 'mites' pressed into a service with which they have not the most remote connection? When appealed to for help, men say: 'Yes; I will give you my mite,' by which they mean an insignificant contribution that has no calculable relation to what they have. The widow's 'mites' were her all; the 'mite' to-day often means the smallest gift that decency will sanction, and sometimes not as much as that.

Misuse of Term.

'General Gordon had a great many medals for which he cared nothing. There was a gold one, however, given him by the Empress of China, with a special inscription engraved upon it, for which he had a great liking. But it suddenly disappeared, no one knew where or how. Years after, it was found out

that he had erased the inscription, sold the medal for £10, and sent the money anonymously for the relief of the sufferers from the cotton famine at Manchester.' A noble deed that cost the doer something, and on which the smile of God must rest.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost inaugurated a new era in religious history. The Mosaic dispensation then gave place to the Christian, and from that time onwards the Christian religion has been the one progressive, beneficent, moral and spiritual force in the religious history of men. It was, however, a transition that carried into the new all the moral and spiritual teachings and institutions of the old. No moral law was abrogated at Pentecost, and no spiritual privilege was curtailed. It simply enlarged, expanded, elevated all that was best in the older dispensation, giving to its teachings a richer significance and a wider application, and infusing into its life a new and divine vitality and force. The personal ministry of Jesus Christ on earth was concluded; the ministry of His immediate successors and apostles was about to begin; and they only waited for that equipment of spiritual power to send them forth as the representatives of the fullest and final revelation of God to men, and as the heralds of His message of salvation to every creature.

Now, what was the effect of this great visitation

on the life of the Church which it moulded and vitalized? To the leaders it gave the power of working miracles in attestation of their message and claim; the power of speaking with 'other tongues' than their own, so that the long and tedious process of learning them might be avoided, and their work begun at once, and this further evidence of a divine appointment supplied; and also the power of convincing, persuasive, effective speech. To the Church it gave unity, harmony, courage, faith, endurance, brotherhood. 'All that believed were together, and had all things common. And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved' (Acts ii. 44-47). Such was the early Church — united, devout, intensely joyous, a perfect brotherhood, and continuously successful. The community of goods was manifestly a temporary arrangement to meet an urgent need. An extraordinary condition of affairs had arisen, and extraordinary measures were necessary to meet it; and it argues much for the power of the Gospel that the Church was equal to the emergency, and that the rich gladly parted with their possessions, so that the need of every man might be

The Early Church.

met.' But that condition of affairs could not be permanent. It was never intended to be so. When the emergency was over, matters reverted to their ordinary lines, only that a new spirit of brotherliness, of sympathy, of mutual helpfulness had been created, which has been the admiration of the world ever since.

Barnabas and Ananias: a Contrast.

There are two names that stand out prominently in the sacred record for their conduct in regard to the funds of the Church. Barnabas, 'a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet' (Acts iv. 36, 37). This was a noble gift, but quite in harmony with all we know of the fine, generous nature of this early disciple. He rendered distinguished service later, and not the least by his introduction of Saul, the now converted persecutor, to the fellowship and ministry of the Church. His generous act was a fitting introduction to a life of devoted and successful Christian service.

Ananias, too, 'sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet' (Acts v. 1, 2). There was no obligation to offer this gift, but when it had been offered, to retain part, while professing to give the whole, was hypocrisy and falsehood. St. Peter's stern interrogatory revealed the infamous device in its true source and character. 'Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie

to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God' (Acts v. 3, 4). The penalty was swift and terrible. Deception and falsehood, if tolerated in the early Church, must have destroyed it. God would accept any gift, however small, if sincere; but He will accept nothing that spring from hypocrisy. 'Truth in the inward part' is His imperative demand.

What a contrast between Barnabas and Ananias! The one was an example and an inspiration; the other an awful warning. Wealth is often the touch-stone of character. As our servant it will exercise a beneficent ministry; as our master it may drag down to ruin; and so, thus early in the history of the young community, the lesson had to be taught, and taught with terrific emphasis, that 'the love of money is a root of many evils.

THE CHURCH IN MACEDONIA

In his second letter to the church at Corinth, where a collection was to be made for the poor Christians of Judea, St. Paul warmly commends the readiness and generosity of the churches in Macedonia, and uses this condition of things as an incentive to the Corinthian Church to be equally ready and generous.

'Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty

abounded unto the riches in their liberality. For according to their power, I bear witness, yea, and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: and this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God' (2 Cor. viii. 1-5). The churches in Macedonia were the first Christian churches in Europe. It was to Macedonia that the apostle went in response to the call: 'Come over and help us;' it was there that Lydia's heart 'was opened, so that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul;' and it was there that the jailor at Philippi cried out: 'What must I do to be saved?' Exceptional interest gathered about the inauguration of that mission, and untold blessing has come to the nations of Europe from it; and though the missionaries had to endure violent persecution, the work prospered, and now St. Paul can hold up the liberality of this church for the emulation of the church at Corinth. The giving of the Macedonian Church had several most commendable qualities.

It was self-sacrificing. They were not rich; they were poor; and to them, giving meant sacrifice. Out of deep poverty, the grace of liberality blossomed out into richest fragrance and finest fruit. The giving that means privation and self-denial is that for which God has the highest commendation. 'I will give you £5;

Self-sacrificing Giving.

I shall never feel it,' said a gentleman to an applicant for assistance. 'Give me something you will feel,' was the reply.

It was spontaneous. It sprang up at once the moment the need was discovered. They had just come into the heritage of a new life; 'old things had passed away;' and in the fresh, warm joy of salvation, they willingly, even beyond their power, contributed to the help of others. There was no waiting or hesitancy; no constraint or pressure; but out of a full heart and a generous soul the gift came.

Spontaneous Giving.

It was spiritual. They 'first gave themselves to the Lord,' and then gladly gave of their substance to His cause. This is surely the right order: self to God first, substance to God afterwards. This is the divine sequence:

Spiritual Giving.

> How can I, Lord, withhold
> Life's brightest hour
> From Thee; or gathered gold,
> Or any power?
> Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee
> When Thou hast given Thine own dear Self for me.

When Thomas Aquinas first visited Rome and expressed his amazement at all the wealth he saw, the Pope said: 'We can no longer say, "Silver and gold have I none."' 'No, indeed,' was the answer; 'nor can we say, "What I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."'

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

After his commendation of the readiness of the churches of Macedonia, St. Paul appeals directly to the church at Corinth to do their part:

'But as ye abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich' (2 Cor. viii. 7-9).

'He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. Let each do according as he hath purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you, that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written,

> He hath scattered abroad; he hath given to the poor;
> His righteousness abideth for ever.

And He that supplieth seed for sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God' (2 Cor. ix. 6-11).

'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift' (2 Cor. ix. 15).

In these suggestive terms, St. Paul discusses Christian giving; its principles, motives and aims. The immediate bearing of his words is on one specific case, the assistance given by the church at Corinth to the church in Judea; but the apostle enunciates principles that apply to the Church in all time, and never more directly than to-day.

Three distinctive qualities of Christian giving are here commended. St. Paul rests the dominant motive on the ground of gratitude to God for the gift of Christ. 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.' The connection between these two things—the grace of Christ and the gratitude of the believer—is close and inseparable. The apostle traces the generosity of the Macedonian churches to its true source, the grace of Christ; and hence, giving has its highest impulse in gratitude to God. All giving to God should have that inspiration. It is pre-eminently an expression of thankfulness to Him, for the bounties of His providence, and the riches of His grace. If we remember what Christ has done for us, there can never be wanting a motive of unequalled authority to the most generous giving.

Grateful Giving.

Corinth was a great centre of commerce. Its geographical position gave it command of an immense traffic, both by land and by sea. With commerce there came wealth; and though the young church there may not have shared to any large extent in

the general wealth of the community, it had possibly much larger resources than the churches in Macedonia. And so St. Paul urges 'bountifulness.' What would be generous for a poor church would be much below the obligation of a rich one. And this is ever the characteristic of the truest giving. It is bountiful, liberal, large-hearted. Its question is: 'How much can I give?' never: 'How little can I get off with giving?'

Bountiful Giving.

The measure of its liberality is the limit of its power. 'Let each do according as he purposeth in his own heart; for God loveth a cheerful giver.' What a suggestive declaration! God Himself 'giveth to all men liberally,' and He loves a giver of His own order. Giving should be joyous, buoyant, enthusiastic. It is not an irksome duty, but a delightful privilege. In generous giving we become 'workers together with God' in His purposes of grace; we reach the higher planes of beneficent service, and realize its loftiest ideals. First, religiously stored for God, and then judiciously distributed to His cause, we may make our wealth minister, in a way, and to an extent of which multitudes have not the faintest conception, to the deepest joy of our own religious life.

Joyful Giving.

These are the principles of giving illustrated in these incidents of New Testament Scripture. They are as applicable to-day as they were then, and as obligatory; and few could predict the transformation of our modern church life and work that their general adoption would produce.

THE WEEKLY OFFERING

CHAPTER VIII

STORING FOR GOD

IN the inculcation of a great duty, it is a great advantage if the law prescribing it is expressed in terse, concise, comprehensive terms; easily understood, universally applicable, with the motive and object definitely stated or implied. Such a law is supplied in the text: 'Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store as God prospers him.' It is easily remembered, cannot be misunderstood, and is readily adaptable to all the varying conditions and experiences of Christian life. It immediately follows, also, St. Paul's great argument for the resurrection of the dead. The apostle sees no incongruity in the closest association of the profoundest of arguments with the most practical of duties. The fact of a coming resurrection and a future life may well supply the most powerful incentive to holy living in the present life, and to a faithful employment of the talents and resources we now possess. Loyalty to God, now, is the preparation

for, and gives promise of, seeing God then. And further, indissolubly linked to this law is a concrete case of Christian beneficence; a collection amongst Gentile churches for the poor Christian Jews of Judea. It was an act of Christian sympathy and brotherhood; and in giving directions for carrying it out, the apostle, by a stroke of sanctified genius, enunciated a law that will solve for all coming time the complicated and sometimes perplexing problem of church finance.

The time was the Lord's day, the day of His resurrection from the dead, a day honoured and observed as the Christian Sabbath. It was the day on which He had demonstrated His divinity and Messiahship, the completion of His earthly ministry and the triumph of His cause. It was the day of fulfilled promises, of quickened hopes, of assured victory, to the infant Church. If Christ rose from the dead, everything was possible that the progress of His kingdom demanded. The day marked the great transition from the old dispensation to the new, the expanding of the day from the dawn of the morning to the splendours of noon. It became the Christian, as successor to the Jewish, Sabbath; and it linked creation with redemption, the fall of man in Eden with his recovery on Calvary. It was the day of the outpouring of the Spirit of God at Pentecost, when the Church received her great equipment for service and sacrifice, for struggle and triumph. In the isle

The Day: 'The first day of the week.'

of Patmos St. John was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day,' and saw the wondrous revelation whose record closes the Sacred Canon. To the early Church it was a day of rest and worship, of prayer and praise, of fellowship and teaching, of spiritual culture and works of charity. St. Paul links gifts to worship. He combines the sacrifice of our gifts with the sacrifice of our devotions, and blends them in one offering before the Lord. St. Paul would have this question of giving determined in the restful, religious atmosphere of the Sabbath. The duty is not a mere secular one; it has its roots deep down in religious life; and it should be settled when the mind is clear, the conscience quick and alert, and the religious faculties aglow with spiritual fervour. This gift is to be an expression of gratitude, an act of sacrifice, an exercise of worship; and it should be far removed from the hard, cold, calculating spirit of the mart or the counting-house. It is to be the response to the question: 'How much owest thou unto my Lord?' and it must be determined in the light of Christian responsibility, privilege and duty, and in the spirit of fidelity to God. And it is to be regularly recurrent; not one Lord's day only, but every Lord's day. The weekly return of the holy day brings with it the weekly return of the holy duty. It is always to have its place in the glad exercises of the Sabbath and the sanctuary. No worshipper is to come empty-handed; no worship is to be complete

without its appropriate gift. What a perfect arrangement of church finance! How complete, how easy, how effective! It is to the Church's incalculable loss that this rule has been neglected. It would be to its incalculable gain for it to be honoured. It is the one law that never fails of success, that brings abundant blessings alike on the giver and the gift.

Manifestly the injunction applies to each member of the Christian community at Corinth. All were included; the poorest and the richest; the youngest and the oldest; those naturally generous and who would readily respond, and those who are naturally selfish and acquisitive, and whom to make liberal is a triumph of grace indeed.

The Donors: 'Every one of you.'

'Every one of you.' Why? There are cogent reasons why giving to the cause of God should be the common duty of all the members of the Church. All have shared in the blessings of the Gospel. St. Paul addresses this church as 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.' 'Ye are washed,' said he, 'ye are justified, ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.' To all the message of salvation had been announced; to all the joy of a new life had come; to all the infinite resources of divine grace were open; all had entered on the great inheritance of sainthood and service; and hence every one should share in this common duty. All should join in

gratitude to God for His goodness and grace. The service of praise in the sanctuary is not for a select few, but for the whole congregation. One voice may lead the devotions, but it should express the gratitude and praise, the need and desire, the confession and adoration of all. And equally, all should share in the expression of thankfulness to God by the gifts that are placed on His altar. It is a Christian duty, and no grateful, sincere heart would desire to be exempt from it; it is a high privilege, and none should be excluded from it.

The gifts here enjoined were to be devoted to the needs of the poor Christians of Judea. Through the Jews the knowledge of God and Christ had come to the Gentiles; and now the Gentiles, having received the heavenly treasure, were to make some return in the contribution of earthly. It was to be an expression of gratitude, sympathy, brotherliness; it was to help to break down national and ecclesiastical prejudices, and unite in one mind and effort all disciples of Christ of varied climes and nationalities. And so all should join in it. The offering gained in worth and graciousness if all shared in it. Here is a great lesson in church finance for all time. The maintenance of the Church is the duty and privilege of all the members of the Church, rich and poor alike. The principle of proportionate giving 'as God prospers' will regulate the amount of our gifts, and will absolutely prevent any possible hardship on the poor and any unworthy niggardliness

on the part of the rich. If our resources are small our gifts cannot be large; and if we have abundant means our gifts must not be small. On this equitable principle 'every one' can share in the joy and duty of maintaining the cause of God. If our Lord had only words of commendation for the poor widow who cast 'her all' into the treasury, who will deny to the poor to-day this privilege and duty? And if He equally denounced greed and avarice, and said, 'Beware of covetousness,' who will say that the rich should not, out of their abundance, and according to it, replenish the treasury of the Lord?

A Methodist minister says that in one of his charges a good man regularly gave every Sabbath £1 for the support of the church. A poor widow was also a member of the same church who supported herself and her six children by washing. She was as regular as the rich man in making her offering of twopence per week, which was all she could spare from her scant earnings. One day the rich man came to the minister and said that the poor widow ought not to give anything, and that he would pay the twopence for her every week. The pastor called to tell her of the offer, which he did in a considerate manner. Tears came into the woman's eyes as she replied: 'Do they want to take from me the comfort I experience in giving to the Lord? Think how much I owe to Him. My health is good, my children keep well, and I receive so many blessings

that I feel I could not live if I did not make my little offering to Jesus every week.' How many there are who know nothing of this joy!

Storing for God is a needful preparation for giving to God. It is the setting apart of a given portion of our income for Christian purposes—laying it by in store, so that it is there, ready when needed, and can be drawn on for any purpose of religion or philanthropy that may come before us, and commend itself to our approval and support. This teaches

The Duty: 'Lay by him in store.'

1. *That our gifts to the Church should not be the result of any momentary impulse.*—How much of the giving of Christian people is of this order; fitful, uncertain, resting on no solid basis of intelligent conviction and moral principle; the product of a tactful appeal, an eloquent speech or a pathetic narrative; the act of a moment of excitement. Storing for God would prevent this, and raise Christian giving to the dignity of an intelligent, religious act. It is a loss and a peril when the Church has to create an excitement, or adopt questionable methods to replenish her coffers and maintain her work. The work itself should constitute the appeal, and the love of the Master supply the motive; and if we have been storing for God, the opportunity will find us ready—able and willing to respond.

2. *That there should be order, method, and continuity in our preparation for giving to God.*—The laying by

in store is to be done periodically, week by week; not on one Lord's day only, but on each Lord's day. This is a matter of first moment. It is so much more difficult to do this steadily and persistently, than spasmodically, and only by some occasional impulse. And yet this continuity of action is essential to success. It is sometimes said, either in mild protest or self-complacency, or in petulance, 'We are always giving!' And why not? Are we not always receiving? Are we not always getting? If the good gifts of God are continually coming, why should they not be continually acknowledged? Morning by morning the sun rises; day by day the tides ebb and flow; year by year the spring comes with its budding foliage, its beautiful flowers, its song of birds. And why should not the grateful and reverent heart be constantly expressing its gratitude and joy in cheerful, constant giving? A right principle, a steady purpose and an enlightened sense of Christian duty and privilege, will make this easy and pleasant.

3. *That what is thus stored is to be reserved, to be drawn on as need arises, or as opportunity invites.*— The supreme act of consecration is done in the storing, before the time for actual distribution comes. The prior decision makes the latter a privilege and a pleasure, where the judgment is convinced and conscience approves. The great need of the Church is to learn the lesson of *storing for God.* If that lesson is learnt, all else will fall into its proper place,

and what is often a burden and bore, be transformed into a joy and a benediction.

For regulating the amount of any Christian's contributions to Christian objects, no rule easier, more equitable, or more efficient could possibly be devised than this: 'As he prospers.' It meets all cases, all conditions, all times, all places, all the changing circumstances of our changing earthly life. In this rule this is a firm, reliable basis for a wise, just, generous decision as to the amount we should devote to the cause of God. The measure of the prosperity we share at the hands of God is to determine the measure of our gifts to religion and philanthropy. The prosperity comes first, and then that determines the other. 'As the Lord hath prospered him.' On the assumption that a man has determined the proportion of his income that is to be dedicated to the cause of God and humanity, the process of determining the amount is simple and natural. Suppose that proportion to be a tithe—one-tenth—the income being ascertained, one-tenth is stored, laid by, placed apart as the Lord's money, to be used as He opens the way. If the income increases, the contributions increase with it; if it declines, they decline. With a fixed income this is easy and automatic. With the fluctuations of business life—good years and bad years—it requires a little more care, but it is still not difficult of arrangement. Take a term of years—five or seven—and make the average the basis of

The Rule: 'As he prospers.'

calculation. This would secure a result as accurate as any human calculations are likely to be, and would satisfy all the demands of prudence, justice or equity. And if at the end of each year the oldest date were dropped out, and the most recent one added, and the average taken afresh, all the variations of even violent fluctuations of commercial life would be met. This rule is also capable of, and, as I think, demands a higher interpretation than this, viz. that not only should the amount devoted to God increase with increasing income, but also the *proportion*. The tithe may be appropriate to a moderate income, but does not meet the obligations of affluence. With increasing income, should not the proportion be revised and raised? Instead of ten per cent., should it not be twenty per cent. or thirty or even fifty, that should be devoted to God? Why should the proportion for God remain stationary when every other item of expenditure—personal, social, domestic—has immensely increased? 'As God prospers' surely means, that in the fullest measure of our prosperity the claims of God shall share, and that to the fullest extent. The value of our gifts is not so much in their intrinsic amount as in the proportion they bear to our total income, and in what is left for ourselves when the gifts are 'laid by.' A tenth on a small income will leave a small remainder; one half of a large income may leave a magnificent reserve.

Such is this intensely interesting incident in the

missionary teaching and experiences of St. Paul, and in the life of the church at Corinth.

What is its teaching to us to-day, and to all subsequent generations of Christian men? Is the principle of church finance which it enshrines worthy of our adoption as the rule and method of our Christian gifts? What advantages does it offer?

Reasons commending this Method to Churches to-day.

1. *It is simple in arrangement and easy of application.*—This is always a strong recommendation in the working out of any law of life. If a law is complicated in its arrangments and difficult of application, it causes irritation and embarrassment, and will probably be evaded if possible; it will fail to secure respect, confidence and approval. Nothing can be simpler or easier than this: 'Lay by in store as God prospers.' The poorest can apply it as well as the richest; those with the most complicated responsibilities, and those whose income is limited and fixed. The young can apply it on entering on the great mission of life; the middle-aged can use it when the tension of life is the greatest and the burdens of life the heaviest; and men in old age can adopt it when the fruit of life's toil is largely gathered, and when its results can be approximately tabulated. All ranks, ages, and conditions are equally suitable for the application of this principle of Christian giving. And it works automatically. Improved resources would mean increased gifts; diminished income lessened gifts. The principle

once adopted needs no revision, it adjusts itself to all the changing conditions of human life, and is equally applicable to each as it occurs.

2. *It is equitable in its incidence.*—It is sometimes a criticism of the laws of national taxation that the incidence is inequitable; that it bears unjustly on different classes of the population; that those least able to pay have relatively the heavier burden, and that those best able to pay are comparatively lightly assessed. Sound finance would suggest that there should be an equitable adjustment of common burdens; and perhaps an ideal condition would be reached if every man were assessed according to his financial position, and according to the benefits secured to him by the taxes he pays. 'Giving as God prospers' on some definite proportion is just to all, and can be oppressive to none. It is a matter of common knowledge that there are often marked inequalities in the amount, and in the spirit, of the gifts of different members of the same church and congregation. Some with larger incomes give cautiously and timidly; others with smaller incomes give generously, both in amount and disposition; so that inequalities, friction, suspicion arise. The common obligations are not fairly borne, the stronger bear less than their share, and the weaker more. This great law is the one corrective of these defects of church life: 'Let every one of you lay by him in store.' Every one doing this has the personal consciousness of trying to do his duty, and he will

usually secure the esteem of others. The various temperaments of men will be balanced and regulated. The impulses of the generous will be controlled by intelligent conviction; the cool calculation of the acquisitive to get and accumulate will be broadened and warmed by feeling the sense of Christian responsibility and privilege. This law will balance and regulate, repress and inspire.

3. *It is effective in result.* — Probably few will question the statement that the general adoption of this principle of systematic and proportionate giving would greatly increase the amount contributed. Even if it did not, it would be infinitely better than the haphazard methods that prevail to-day. It must be better to give, if no more were given, on some intelligent principle, than on the mere impulse of the moment; but it is practically certain that the adoption of this principle would broaden Christian sympathies, quicken interest in Christian work, and intensify generous impulses. If this law were our guide, few institutions would languish for want of adequate support, few churches be crippled for want of funds, few difficulties remain that generous help could remove, few calls for assistance to worthy causes be unanswered, and the great doors of missionary extension in all lands would be thrown wide open to welcome the crowds of Christian teachers whom the emancipated and sanctified resources of a reconverted church would select, appoint, and thrust out into the great harvest-field. This plan succeeds

where every other fails. It is the remedy for most, or all, the financial embarrassments which afflict the Church to-day; and it gives the promise and the potency of a system of church finance that will be equal to all the demands and all the opportunities that the future may unfold.

CHRISTIAN GENEROSITY

CHAPTER IX

THE OBJECTS TO WHICH DEVOTED

In our contributions to Christian causes, there is, properly and inevitably, a large discretion left to individual donors. Even if we have no recognized principle of giving—giving as the Lord prospers—there are some objects which appeal more powerfully to our sympathies than others, and to which we more readily respond; and if we have learnt that great lesson of 'storing for God'—setting aside a given, specific portion of our income for religious and charitable purposes — the same preferences will remain. We shall then form an intelligent judgment of what causes are worthy and needy, and shall dispense our gifts according to the dictates of reason and conscience. This is right and proper. The great Giver of all would leave us, as the recipients of His gifts, to dispense ours with discretion, intelligence and sympathy, and in cheerful submission to the guidance of His word and spirit. Heredity, environment, training, temperament, may each have

its influence in determining the channel along which our generosity shall flow. Often what is nearest appeals to us more powerfully than what is more distant, and what we personally know than what is merely reported to us. The great guiding principles that we should recognize are, an enlightened sense of the stewardship of wealth, and an earnest desire to glorify God and serve humanity. Still, there are certain broad lines along which Christian giving will uniformly run. What are these?

THE MAINTENANCE OF DIVINE WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN TEACHING

It was said in commendation of the centurion who appealed to our Lord to come and heal his sick servant, 'he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.' Evidently 'the elders of the Jews,' who conveyed that appeal, thought this act so worthy that it should secure at once Christ's interest in the case brought before Him. And it would not be difficult to show that one of the highest objects to which Christian thought, energy, and generosity can direct themselves is provision for the regular and devout worship of Almighty God, and the constant and faithful preaching of the gospel of Christ. The highest interests of mankind are involved in the maintenance of Christian worship and teaching. This the surest guarantee of material as well as moral strength and progress. The sanctuaries of the land are the bulwarks of its safety and

permanence; and not the least, the thousands of little Bethels in the rural districts, where is nurtured a simple piety and a rural strength, which is of inestimable worth to the interests of the empire at large. Two distinct, but closely allied, objects of Christian generosity here present themselves to our view.

1. *The building of suitable edifices.* — Of course, Christian churches, with a long history behind them, have had these largely provided by the gifts and service of past generations of Christian men. The Church of England to-day has inherited ecclesiastical property worth many millions sterling, as well as immense endowments for the maintenance of its ministry. The older Free churches of the land have also entered on a large heritage of church property provided by the free gifts of earlier generations of Free Churchmen, and they share in the inspiration, in all the splendid traditions, that gather about these ancient edifices, and the men who ministered in them. The duty of these churches to-day is to maintain what others have handed on to them, and to use their resources for meeting new needs as they arise by the growing and shifting populations of the hour.

It is not easy for such churches to realize the difficulties that have to be met, and the generous gifts that are made in the creation and development of a church like ours, or indeed the Methodist Church as a whole, but especially its smaller and younger branches. Our Church originated in a fervid, open-air

evangelism among the masses of the people of this land, and as men were won to Christ, and formed into churches, the need for places of worship became imperative. The very success of the work became its difficulty and embarrassment. The people were poor, and yet out of their poverty, with such assistance as well-wishers afforded them, they provided thousands of places of worship throughout the length and breadth of the land. In its early stages the work was necessarily slow and difficult, but with the growing strength and numbers of the community, it received a remarkable acceleration. In sixty years—1810 to 1870—the churches built cost £1,000,000, and a debt of £500,000 remained on them. In the next thirty years—1870 to 1900—the property acquired cost £3,000,000, and of this amount £2,500,000 was raised and paid. In the first period the average annual expenditure was £16,500, and the amount raised yearly to meet it was £8,250; and in the second period the average annual expenditure was £100,000, and the amount raised yearly was £83,000. This is a splendid testimony to the energy, foresight, generosity, and self-sacrifice of the leaders and builders of our Church, and a striking proof that aggressive Christianity can provide what it needs for the cultivation and development of its own life and service, without recognition or assistance from the State in any form whatever.

The erection of houses of prayer, where needed, is still an object demanding the attention and support

of the churches, and which must commend itself to the confidence and help of every earnest Christian, and, indeed, of every sincere and enlightened patriot. When the great purposes which such structures are intended to serve are remembered—that there devout men and women will periodically assemble for worship, teaching and fellowship, for inspiration and guidance, for comfort in sorrow, for training for the great duties of life, for preparation for the future—the work of providing such centres of spiritual power and blessing must commend itself as one of the worthiest to which Christian generosity can consecrate its gifts.

Sir Francis Lycett's great Gift.

It would be difficult to fully estimate the worth and influence to the Wesleyan Methodist Church of the magnificent gift by Sir Francis Lycett of £50,000, supplemented by a further gift of £100,000 at the decease of his widow, towards the erection of Wesleyan Methodist chapels and schools in London. The immense impetus that was given to this work by that princely gift is seen in the enormous development of Wesleyan Methodism in the metropolis during the last forty or forty-five years. Prior to that period, for one hundred and twenty years, progress had been difficult and comparatively slow; but since, it has been by 'leaps and bounds.' The diagram on the following page will supply striking evidence of this, and will show what may be the issue of one noble contribution.

The gift itself was a remarkable one, but perhaps its best results have been seen in the interest it has awakened, the stimulus supplied, the larger, broader outlook that it made possible. That great gift has contributed to the creation of a large number of strong and progressive churches that to-day are centres of teaching, fellowship and philanthropy; and that one Christly deed will go on bearing its beneficent and abundant fruit, for generations and centuries to come. Perhaps no greater service could be rendered to humanity than to make possible and frequent such extensions of spiritual service, influence and blessing.

2. *For sustaining the services of worship and teaching.*—The material structure is erected to be a centre of spiritual life and work. Worship is the highest act of the human spirit. It brings the soul into contact with its creator, the divine Father; it stirs the deepest emotion of the human heart, and calls forth its highest powers; and it confers on all who sincerely offer it the richest benediction. Perhaps in nothing is the immeasurable superiority of man over animals more clearly seen than in his capacity for worship. This is man's highest distinction. He can exercise his great powers in many spheres—industry and commerce, science and art, literature, politics, and the activities of social life; but in no sphere does he find finer scope for his powers, or share a richer benediction, than in the regular and

For Public Worship.

Wesleyan Methodist Metropolitan Chapel Building Fund

TABULAR VIEW

Showing the Comparative Growth of Methodism in London, from its birth in 1739, as indicated by the acquisition of commodious permanent Chapels, in the following periods, during the last of which the Fund has been in operation.

1739 to 1772 (33 years)	1772 to 1802 (30 years)	1802 to 1832 (30 years)	1832 to 1862 (30 years)	1862 to 1901 (39 years)
No commodious permanent Chapel acquired.	City Road.	Total— 9 CHAPELS. 18 smaller Chapels belong to this period.	Total— 16 CHAPELS. 18 smaller Chapels belong to this period.	1862 to 1901 (39 years)

Total, 113 CHAPELS, with Sunday Schools, Lecture Halls, &c., costing probably £1,000,000, towards which Grants and Loans have been made by this Fund amounting to £260,000. Further assistance has been given in securing 16 additional sites, besides help to the London Mission.

reverent worship of God in the sanctuary. In praise and prayer, in confession and thanksgiving, in quiet meditation and in songs of triumph, men may worship God; and in worship they find open before them all the stores of divine grace. To maintain in full efficiency all the arrangements of divine worship is one of the worthiest objects of Christian gifts.

For Christian Teaching and Appeal.

Christianity has a message of truth as well as a ritual of worship. It provides for the exposition of Christian teaching by the living voice, the inculcation of Christian duty by the called and accredited messenger. Worship and teaching should go hand in hand; each has its own sphere, and each is supplementary of the other. Christ's own ministry was largely one of teaching. In the synagogue or the temple, on the mountain slopes or on the Galilean lake, by the wayside or in the house, He taught the people. And the best days of the Christian Church have been those in which the Word of God has had its rightful place in the arrangements of the sanctuary. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance and value to any land of an open Bible, printed in the language of the people, with its truths regularly taught in the house of God. It inculcates on man the highest lessons of life; it feeds, moulds and invigorates his spiritual nature; it presents to him the highest ideals—ideals of heroism and endurance, devotion and service, fidelity and sacrifice; and it shows how the ideal may become actual by the

constraining love, the infinite grace of God in Christ. In its revelation of the character and will of God; in its gracious invitations and precious promises; in its records of history in which righteousness is exalted and wickedness branded; in its many-sided biographies, where virtue is ever commended and vice condemned; by precept and by picture, by the teachings of the law and the lessons of living men, Christian teaching ever aims to enrich individual character, and purify and elevate human society. Such an object is a fitting one for Christian liberality. 'The labourer is worthy of his hire;' and if he faithfully ministers in spiritual things, it is just and wise and equitable that he should share in temporal.

And Christian teaching finds one of its most promising fields of service amongst the young. The obligation of the parent for the religious instruction of the child is paramount; but as this is often ignored, the Sunday School movement for the inculcation of Christian truth on the young, and for winning them while young to a Christian life, is a splendid ideal. It is work of the right kind, at the right age, and amongst right persons, and is worthy of the most generous support the largest liberality can supply.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL AT HOME AND ABROAD

It may be said that the objects of Christian liberality already named are for the Church's own welfare and edification, and that what men give to

maintain the institutions of worship and teaching brings a regular return in benediction on themselves. This is no doubt true. But may it not also be said that a healthy church is the only agency fit for, and capable of, aggressive Christian work. It is only when her own ideals are high, her faith strong, and her consecration complete, that the Church can effectively enter the doors of service that are open to her, or bear the responsibilities of a world-wide evangelism. A strong church at home, with clear vision, lofty purpose, holy enthusiasm, and Christlike generosity, will supply the motive, the direction, the men, and the means, for the propagation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This work has two sections.

Home Evangelization.

Among the growing populations of this land there has seldom been more urgent need for an aggressive evangelism than exists to-day. The materialism of the age, the eager pursuit of wealth, the neglect of the sanctuary, the desecration of the Sabbath, the vice and crime, the drunkenness and gambling which prevail among us, constitute a loud and imperative call to the Church to carry the message of the Gospel with loving hands and willing feet to the masses of the people. The only hope of the lapsed masses, and the lapsing masses, is a living church. Legislation can do something; education can do something; sanitation can do something; but Christ alone can save. They need the same Christ that the Church herself has

found; and that Christ will come to them, and they to Him, when Christly men, with earnest purpose, and tender hearts, and generous gifts, take Him to them. Jesus Christ came 'to seek and save that which is lost'; and whenever the Church throbs with the spirit of Christ she becomes evangelistic —intensely, personally, passionately evangelistic. Christianity has a mission to the lost, a message of hope to the despairing, a helping hand to the oppressed and the helpless. Evangelism is not an accident of church life, it pertains to its essence; it is not a mere addendum, but an element essential to its best life; and no church is fully equipped or fully healthy that does not give this a chief place in the plans and purpose of her work. Methods of evangelism must, of course, vary with the varying conditions of human life. Men vary, and they need to be approached by varying methods according to their circumstances, temperaments, or even prejudices; but the spirit of evangelism, the aims of evangelism, the agencies of evangelism, will never be absent from the organization of a healthy church. And to this work the Church must give her most generous support. No gifts can be better employed than in saving men, in maintaining agencies and institutions which accomplish that object; and for that object the resources of the Church should be laid under large and constant tribute.

The obligation of the Church to send the Gospel to the heathen world rests primarily on the Lord's

final commission to His disciples to go 'and disciple all nations.' On that basis it is permanent and universal, and can only cease when every heathen tribe has heard of Christ and had the offer of His great salvation.

Christian Missions to Heathen Lands.

But it may be pertinently asked: 'Can the Church herself be saved if she neglects this duty? Is not the execution of this commission essential to her own best life? And can that life be maintained in health and vigour if she ignores this supreme obligation? The Church retains and develops her noblest qualities — her purity, her vitality, her joy—by doing her Master's will in her Master's spirit; and that can only be done as she sees clearly the sublime purposes of His redemptive mission, and ceaselessly aims to win to His feet the entire race, for the salvation of which He lived and died.

The records of Foreign Missionary work during the last hundred years are the most inspiring in the history of the Church. 'At the beginning of the century the number of ordained missionaries was 50; now it is 5,063. Then there was not one unmarried lady missionary; now there are 3,403. Then there was not one native missionary in all heathen lands; now the number is 4,053. Then the number of native assistants was 80; now the number of native teachers, catechists, and evangelists is 72,000. Then the number of converts and catechumens was 12,000; now there are 11,039 organized native

churches, with a membership of 1,317,684, the number added in 1899 being 84,186. Then the amount given in support of Foreign Missions was £10,000; in 1897 it was, according to Dr. George Smith's calculations, £3,248,874.'[1] These are remarkable figures, but they represent much more than they describe—'a history which no pen can write and no tongue can tell.'

And yet the work is barely begun. Only the fringe of the stupendous problem has been touched. 'On the broad plains of China, there are a thousand cities, surging with human life, that have never heard the Gospel. India is eighteen times as large as Great Britain, and includes one-fifth of the world's population; and this is largely subject to the power of a corrupt Hinduism with its relentless fetters of caste.'[2] Africa, the scene of untold cruelties, 'comprises one-fifth the land surface of the globe and one-eighth of its population. In the heart of this dark continent there are seventy-five millions of people, without a church, without a missionary, without a Bible, without a Christian to break the rule of Satan. It is estimated that under the darkness of Fetishism, four millions of lives are yearly burned, mutilated, or otherwise sacrificed in superstitious cruelty.'[3]

And what is the Church doing to honour this stupendous obligation? It is estimated that 'the

[1] *Christ and Missions.* By Rev. JOHN SMITH.
[2] and [3] *My Silver and Gold*, pp. 50, 54, 59.

thirty millions of Protestant communicants contribute annually to the cause of Foreign Missions about two and a half million pounds; that is to say, that each church member gives to this work on an average less than a halfpenny per week.'[1] This is a lamentably small contribution for the greatest work on earth, and ought to be quadrupled at once. 'The foreign missionary idea is the necessary completion of the Christian life. It is the apex to which all lines of the pyramid lead up. The Christian life without it is an imperfect, mangled thing.'[2]

THE BROAD FIELD OF CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY

Every Christian man would desire that some portion of his gifts should be devoted to the relief of suffering humanity. The example of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the spirit of Christ, would prompt this. No appeal for help was ever made to Him in vain; and as men seek to perpetuate His ministry to-day, they will do it—in part, at least—by dedicating some part of their gifts to the help of the poor and needy. And does not Christ make practical beneficence a test of character, and of fidelity to Himself. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me' (Matt. xxv.). How suggestive and admonitory is the declaration. 'We serve Christ by serving His creatures; we honour Him by helping each other in the ministry of kindly service.' Our gifts of philanthropy may flow in two great channels.

[1] and [2] *My Silver and Gold*, pp. 73 and 75.

Cases of real need exist, and often in considerable numbers; and if sought, may be discovered and helped, and helped with a benediction on both giver and receiver. Indiscriminate charity is to be avoided. It will defeat its own end, and encourage hypocrisy and imposition; but charity linked to adequate knowledge and personal service will bring light to many a dark chamber, and joy to many a sad heart. Perhaps few things need greater discretion than a wise distribution of personal gifts of charity. The aim should be to help without injuring, to relieve but not to pauperize, to make this service a means of grace as well as a contribution of financial assistance, to direct the thought of the recipient from the human channel through which the gift comes to its great source in the goodness and grace of God. This work is difficult and delicate, and yet few departments of charity can confer richer benediction on those who enter it than this work of distributing to the need of the sick, the distressed, the poor. It is service that embodies the spirit of Christ, that brings the giver into touch with humanity at its most susceptible point, that evokes the spirit of gratitude and appreciation, and that makes 'the widow's heart to sing for joy.'

Personal Gifts to Cases of known and urgent Need.

There is a large area of Christly service that can best be covered by co-operation with others. None but the wealthiest could, for example, found a hospital, build an orphanage, endow almshouses

for the aged poor, or maintain any one of the great philanthropic institutions which are the honour of a Christian land. These are among the worthiest and most commendable types of charitable service open to men; but only few have resources sufficient to undertake them on their own initiative and at their own cost. By combination, however, the humblest among us may share in this beneficent work. The individual contribution may not be large, but if it is associated with hundreds or thousands of others, it takes its place in ministering to the efficient maintenance of the largest institutions of the world. In these ways, then, each one 'may serve his own generation.' He may consecrate some portion of his income to these great religious and humanitarian objects — objects which cannot fail to contribute largely to the personal and social, the moral and spiritual welfare of mankind.

Generous Support of Philanthropic Institutions.

THE MEASURE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY

CHAPTER X

MEASURE OF LIBERALITY

WHAT proportion of our income to-day, in Christian lands, should be given to the cause of God and humanity? We live in 'the dispensation of the Spirit,' the last and greatest dispensation of divine truth and grace, the final and fullest revelation of the divine will and claim. What, then, is our duty on this question? There is, no doubt, discretion left to us as to the objects we should assist, though there are certain broad lines of obligation which apply to all—the maintenance of the institutions of Christian worship and teaching, the propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad, and the wide mission of philanthropy. Does this discretion also apply to the amount of our gifts? Is there any fixed proportion below which we may not fall without failure of duty, but beyond which we may go, wisely, safely, gladly, in special circumstances! Or is the amount we may give left absolutely to the discretion of each

individual donor without any guidance from Scripture or experience? It must be admitted that the great majority of the members of our churches seem to act as though no definite obligation was enjoined either by religion or humanity. 'Give as you please,' is their principle, which usually means 'as little as you can,' rather than 'as much as you ought.' They act on the motto: "Fear God, honour the king, but part with your money the very last thing.' Are there, then, any great guiding principles which may solve this problem, and lead to such decisions as will harmonize with duty and privilege, with reason and revelation, and help us to the right discharge of this great obligation to God and man? Probably there will be a consensus of opinion that in the ordinary circumstances of life the tithe, or one-tenth, of our income would form a fair basis of assessment, subject to exceptional conditions, of wealth on the one hand, where a larger proportion may be imperatively demanded, or poverty on the other, where a smaller proportion may be reasonably allowed. Is there any warrant for this general opinion? And if so, on what does it rest? In our judgment there is such warranty, and that it rests upon

TWO GREAT FACTS

There seems no reason to doubt that the law of tithe for purposes of religion was long anterior to the law of Moses, or the vow of Jacob at Bethel, or the gifts of Abram to Melchizedek. The

universal obligation of the tithe from the earliest ages, and in all lands, is the strongest presumptive evidence of its divine origin, and of its appointment being coincident with the founding of the human race. It is not so much a subject of divine revelation as the recognition by revelation of a law already in existence. 'The heathen have adopted tithe for religious purposes. The Arabian merchantmen dedicated the tenth of their odoriferous spices. The citizens of Athens sustained by tithe the numerous shrines which acquired for them a reputation for religious reverence and worship. The Romans presented to Hercules a tenth of the spoil of war. Many Hindus and Chinese devote a much larger sum to the service of idolatry.' It is thus evident that among all nations the tithe has been considered an appropriate proportion of income to be given to the service of religion; and this fact presupposes the promulgation of a law prior to the confusion of tongues at Babel, and anterior to any written revelation of God to man. It may thus be fairly given a prominent place as a fact, to assist us to determine the measure of our liberality to-day.

The General Practice of Mankind.

Much of the teaching of Scripture has been already considered in the earlier sections of this lecture, and is only briefly referred to now for the guidance it supplies on the proportion of income that ought to be given by us to-day. Abram presented to Melchizedek

The Teaching of Scripture.

one-tenth of the spoils taken from the retreating kings (Gen. xiv. 18-20). Jacob, fleeing from the menaces of Esau, as he slept at Bethel, saw a remarkable vision, and he vowed to God 'of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth to Thee' (xxviii. 22). The official enactment of the tithe, under the Mosaic law, was manifestly but the divine endorsement of a law already recognized, and it thus 'emphasizes the importance of its continued observance.' Every Jew was required by law to give one-tenth of his income to the maintenance of religion and its ordinances—the portion given to the Levites. This was 'the Lord's tithe,' and was assigned entirely to the maintenance of His servants. But the tithe did not, by any means, exhaust the contributions of the devout and patriotic Jew to the purposes of religion and philanthropy. The tenth was obligatory, the law required it, and to give it was the bounden duty of every Jew; but in addition, 'free-will offerings' for specific objects and on special occasions added largely to the sum total of his contribution. 'Speak unto the children of Israel,' said God to Moses, 'that they bring Me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take My offering' (Ex. xxv. 2). It is evident, therefore, that the gifts of the Jews went far beyond the statutory tithe.

In the New Testament there is no re-enactment of that law of tithe, nor is there the slightest intimation that it was abrogated. The most reasonable

deduction is that its continued obligation is assumed, and that it thus did not need, in the new conditions, distinct ratification. Christianity is an expansion, an enlargement of Judaism; an advance, not a retrogression; a movement into fuller knowledge, clearer light, broader life, higher privilege. It is impossible to imagine that Christians are under less obligation to give of their substance to the cause of God than were the Jews. Christianity is Judaism lifted to a higher life, with a wider opportunity and a nobler mission. 'They are not two churches, but two states of the same church;' and it cannot be that the obligation of self-sacrifice and generosity has been diminished, because in the latter stage of the one church it has come into a heritage of privilege and blessing infinitely higher than it shared in its earlier. The Jews gave with the utmost generosity for the building of the material temple; shall the Christian give less liberally for the rearing of the spiritual house—the tabernacle of God with men—the temple of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, and saved and sanctified humanity its imperishable materials? The whole spirit and teaching of the New Testament is against any such supposition. The character and mission of Christ, the beneficence and devotion of the early Church, the stern condemnation of all selfishness and avarice which we find everywhere in the New Testament, as also its lofty commendation of self-sacrifice and liberality, coupled

New Testament Teaching.

with its apostolic mission of world-wide evangelism, all demand a spirit of generosity in the Christian, not less but much greater than that of the Jew. 'Freely ye have received, freely give'—that is the lofty plane on which the Christian must settle this question of the measure of his liberality.

From these considerations some regulations for our guidance are fairly deducible.

FOUR REASONABLE REGULATIONS

1. *That every Christian should give to Christian objects a definite portion of his income, and that under ordinary circumstances this amount should not be less than one-tenth.*—That this broad proposition will admit of exceptions is both admitted and intended; but that it is a reasonable and equitable one few intelligent Christians will deny, and thousands from personal and practical experience will confirm with the utmost emphasis. The conditions of men vary so much that the same actual income may have to bear a much greater liability in some cases than in others. Domestic expenses, social position, commercial conditions may all affect the equitable application of this rule of tithe; so that its rigorous and uniform inculcation would possibly bear hardly on some cases, and leave others too lightly assessed. A working-man with a family, and an income of £100 per year, might find it difficult to give £10 annually out of it; whilst a single young man with the same income, and only himself to provide for,

might easily do it, and ought to. Still, the proportion of the tenth is reasonable, and capable of wide application. Every Christian ought to give a definite sum, a distinct proportion of his income, to religious and charitable objects; but the precise proportion must be determined by his own conscience, after seeking all the light that the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the example of saintly men can supply; and unless special circumstances demand it, that proportion should not be less than the tithe or tenth.

2. *That our gifts should be proportionate to the circumstances of the giver.*—It is freely conceded that less than the tithe will fairly meet the obligation of some; but it is firmly contended that much more than the tenth is urgently demanded by the circumstances of others. If, with an income of £100 per annum and family responsibilities, a donor gives £10, he gives generously; but what of the donor with an income of £400 or £700 or £1,000 per year? Does the same proportion of a tenth cover his liability? Ought not his proportion to be much more than the tithe to place him on a par with his humbler brother? It may be pleaded that he has a larger expenditure; but is this so, relatively? Is not the amount left when the necessary expenditure has been met, vastly greater than in the case of the poorer donor? And should any Christian largely increase his expenditure on himself and his household, and yet leave the proportion for Christ and philanthropy exactly the

same? It cannot be right for Christian men to increase every other item of expenditure, and not proportionately increase their gifts to the cause of God. Out of an income of say £1,000 per year, would the setting aside of £200, or one-fifth, be as much as setting aside £10, or one-tenth, out of an income of £100? What is pleaded for is that the gift should be in harmony with the circumstances of the giver. Have Christian men any right to add house to house, and land to land, and yet leave the proportion for God at the level of much humbler circumstances? The parable of the talents teaches that men are responsible for the wise use of the powers and resources with which they are entrusted, and 'where much is given,' there 'much will be required.' 'Proportion thy charity to the strength of thy estate, lest God proportion thy estate to the weakness of thy charity.'[1]

3. *That with increasing income, there ought to be some equitable and increasing proportion of giving to God.*—A Christian merchant in Boston, when twenty-one years of age, drew up and subscribed the following covenant, to which he faithfully adhered to the day of his death:

'By the grace of God I will never be worth more than 50,000 dollars.

'By the grace of God I will give one-fourth of the net profits of my business to charitable and religious uses.

[1] QUARLES.

'If ever I am worth 20,000 dollars, I will give one-half of my net profits; and if ever I am worth 30,000 dollars, I will give three-fourths, and the whole after 50,000 dollars. So help me, God, or give to a more faithful steward and set me aside.'

Is there not much in this example worthy of imitation? Ought not the growing wealth of the Church to be laid under tribute in increasing proportions for the service of God and the weal of man? Is it not God who gives the power to get wealth? Is it not the 'blessing of the Lord that maketh rich'? And if the tithe served in humbler circumstances, ought it not to be two tithes, or three tithes, or five tithes as prosperity abounds and riches increase? And is not that a noble ideal, to continue commercial life after provision has been made for all probable future needs, and devote the entire proceeds to the service of God? There can be no better crown to an honourable and successful commercial career than the consecration of the fruit of its closing years absolutely and exclusively to the high purposes of religion and philanthropy.

4. *That in addition to this dedication of a regular and increasing proportion of our income to God, special offerings should be freely given for special mercies, and under special conditions of personal and ecclesiastical life.*—The Jew gave his tithe, probably not less than two tithes; but in addition to this, he gave 'offerings' of various kinds at the great religious festivals of the

year. And into every life there come occasions of special benediction, when a grateful soul will not limit its gifts to the ordinary tithe, but will want to make a special acknowledgement to the great Giver. On recovery from some protracted affliction, on deliverance from some impending peril, or in acknowledgement of some special benediction, or some long career of happiness or prosperity, such a thank-offering may be fittingly presented. And such occasions occur in church life as well as in personal life. At a private meeting preparatory to the inauguration of a Thanksgiving Fund, one saintly man said: 'Let us remember what we *were;* what we *are;* and *to whom we owe the difference;* and let us give to the Thanksgiving Fund out of capital and above our ordinary tithe gifts.' That is surely the right view to take. Ordinary mercies demand daily acknowledgement, cheerful and devout; but special times come to all churches—the erection of a new house of prayer, the celebration of some great epoch, the inauguration of some new programme of aggressive work; and then some special gift, 'a free-will offering,' must express and attest our zeal, fidelity, and devotion.

Now, to what extent do these considerations guide the contributions of Christian men to-day? It is difficult to definitely say; but that the general membership of the Church fail to recognize their full force and value is practically certain. It seems probable, however, that as the result of fuller and

more frequent teaching on the subject from the pulpit, and the illustrious example of a few distinguished laymen in the churches, attention is being directed to the subject, and an increasing number of the members of all religious communities are beginning to give systematically, and in proportion to their income. That the universal adoption of this principle would be fraught with vast and beneficent results few will question.

SOME PRACTICAL RESULTS

The effect of the adoption of system and proportion in giving would be most marked and beneficial.

1. *It would remove from the Church a grave reproach.*—Why is it that so many religious and philanthropic institutions languish for want of adequate support? that the aggressive movements of the Church are often curbed and crippled for want of the generous and enthusiastic aid they need and deserve? that the cry of the heathen, 'Come over and help us,' is uttered largely in vain? and that almost every missionary society has to moderate its plans and restrain its enthusiasm because it has not the means to carry out a bold policy of world-wide evangelism? Is it because the Church is poor? Never was she so rich as she is to-day. It is because her wealth is not consecrated as it ought to be; it is because her giving is not inspired by the impulse of gratitude, by the constraint of affection, and not controlled by intelligent conviction; it is

because wealth is not felt to be a trust, a stewardship to be used for the glory of God and the weal of men. Successful men who adopt the soundest commercial principles in business leave their giving to impulse, custom, or caprice. Churches organize effectively many departments of their work, and yet leave the financial support of their institutions to the passing emotion of the hour. Hence the reproach to which the Church is exposed, and rightly exposed, of seeing so much Christian work waiting to be done, and yet not supplying the means for doing it. The one remedy for this disastrous condition of the matter is regular, religious, proportionate giving. This is the only remedy that will be fully and permanently effective. Every other has been tried, and failed. This never fails. Wherever it is applied, success is prompt, certain, complete.

2. *It would raise the tone of Christian character and service.*—Martin Luther said that 'every man needs three conversions: head, heart, pocket; and that no man's conversion is complete till each stage of this process and progress has been passed.' With many, the third conversion—pocket—is lamentably incomplete; and in consequence, the Church loses much of balance and harmony of character, and of buoyancy, enthusiasm, and success in work. Some men can pray, but they don't give; they can preach, but they don't give; they can work, but they don't give; or if they do give, there is no heart in it; it is grudging, formal, 'of necessity.' A lay preacher, fond of

preaching, was once asked for a donation towards some worthy object. He was unwilling to respond to the appeal, but said if the applicants would ask him to preach, he should be glad to comply; adding, 'But as to giving, it is not my forte.' What a wretched confession! Evidently Luther's third conversion was entirely omitted. Such men and such churches exhibit no harmony of character, no balance of qualities; if they develop at all, they develop abnormally, with defect here, excrescence there, and completeness nowhere. A healthy organism will grow in all its parts, equally and proportionately, without fault or redundance; and a healthy Christian, or a healthy church, will grow in every quality, intelligence, devotion, sympathy and generosity. The Church needs this principle of giving to perfect her character and complete her equipment, and nothing can supply its place. Given this, and it will enrich devotion, invigorate service and ennoble character; and it will enable the Church to fitly and faithfully represent and interpret her Master to men.

3. *It will obviate any need for questionable methods of raising church funds.*—That such questionable methods are sometimes employed to replenish the Church's exchequer is too well known to need specific proofs, and as a consequence, the spiritual force of the Church is weakened, and her moral tone lowered. Energies that ought to be used for spiritual and aggressive work are claimed and

exhausted by plans, programmes, devices to raise funds. Money is wanted, and as there is no realization of the stewardship of wealth, no intelligent principle of giving to God, it is not forthcoming; and hence wits are set to work to devise some scheme by which unwilling contributors — saints and sinners alike—may be coaxed or tickled or wheedled out of some portion of their wealth to meet the needs of the Church. It is all very sad, very humiliating, and perfectly unnecessary. Systematic and proportionate giving on the part of any church will supply all its needs, without its having recourse to any methods other than those that are scriptural and honourable; and equally helpful to its spiritual life, its Christian reputation, its effective work.

4. *It will prepare the way for a wider and worthier mission of teaching, evangelism, and philanthropy than the Church has ever yet been able to undertake.*—What mind can grasp the magnitude of the work that is possible to the Church if all her resources were fully consecrated? The successes of the past, at home and abroad, may well inspire gratitude and hope; but what the future will be when 'all the tithes and offerings are brought into the storehouse' none can forecast. The 'windows of heaven' will indeed be 'opened,' and God will pour out a 'blessing' in such abundant showers as shall make the 'desert rejoice, and the wilderness blossom as the rose.' Then will the hoarded treasures of the Church be brought out to the light of day, and minted into a currency of

benediction that shall reach and enrich all lands. For the sway of universal empire our Lord 'waits' for the released and consecrated resources of that Church which He has redeemed with His 'own precious blood.'

MOTIVES TO SYSTEMATIC AND PROPORTIONATE GIVING

CHAPTER XI

MOTIVES TO SYSTEMATIC GIVING

MOTIVE counts for much in Christian giving, as in many other departments and activities of life. It is not so much the intrinsic value of a gift that determines its worthiness, as the spirit that prompts it, and the relation it bears to the resources from which it comes. A large gift from wealth may be much smaller really than a small one from poverty. The 'two mites' of the poor widow of our Lord's time were much more in His estimation than the substantial contributions of the rich. They gave of their superfluity, what was but a small fraction of their resources; she gave 'her all.' We need, therefore, to cultivate pure and lofty motives in storing for God, and to ally motive to intelligent conviction. Each will supplement the other, and greatly increase its power for good. The ocean steamship needs not only power in her engines, but intelligence at her helm; if intelligence is wanting she is dangerous,

and if power is deficient she is helpless. And in human life a worthy motive will prompt to worthy deeds; but worthy deeds will only be worthily done when enlightened vision directs and controls. Ostentation in giving is always to be avoided. The Pharisees gave 'tithes of all they possessed,' and boasted about it. They did the right thing, but in the wrong spirit, and from the wrong motive. Right motives supply the impulse of beneficence, the power that inspires and sustains its activities; and Christian giving should spring from a grateful and sympathetic heart, and be directed by an observant mind and an informed judgment.

Three principal motives are behind all worthy giving. We should give: For God's sake; for man's sake; and for our own sake.

FOR GOD'S SAKE

The divine claim on the generous offerings of men may be urged, alike by providence and redemption.

The Providence of God.

Every good gift of life comes from a divine Father's hand, and demands acknowledgement and praise. What have we that we have not received? Our life is His gift; so are health and intellect, home and friends, powers and possessions. Not only are we ourselves 'not our own,' but we have nothing of our own. Whatever we have is lent to us, entrusted to us, to be used for wise ends; and we are responsible to the Giver for the purpose to which His gifts are

applied. We need to learn by emphatic reiteration that man is not an owner, but a steward. The Great Master has placed in his hands talents, time, treasure, opportunities; and He says: 'Occupy till I come.' And the original Proprietor distributes His gifts as He will. To some are given 'five talents'; to others 'two'; to others but 'one'; and yet each may be equally grateful to the Giver for the gift, and equally faithful in the use he makes of it. Whatever we have, then, comes from God; we have no proprietary rights in it; He has given us 'all things richly to enjoy.' What, then, should be the attitude of every reasonable, and especially every Christian, mind to God, the Giver of all? What return should be made for this ceaseless and boundless goodness? Should there not be appreciation and gratitude, praise and devotion, service and gifts? Ought we not to recognize the bounteous providence of God? It comes to us in the sunshine and the shower, in the flowers that bloom and the birds that sing, in the joy of human friendships, and the healthy activities of human industry, in the pleasures of intellect and emotion, in the ministries of the Sabbath and the sanctuary, in the light that guides, the strength that sustains, the power that protects, day by day. Ought we not to say: 'Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, our lips shall praise Thee; our hands shall serve Thee; our feet shall run in the way of Thy testimonies; and our glad thank-offerings shall "show forth Thy praise," and serve the purposes of

Thy kingdom?' Should we not say, 'Of Thine own' will we 'give Thee,' freely, gratefully, adoringly? As we have received 'bountifully,' so will we give. Our gifts shall be worthy of the divine acceptance, for we will give of the best—the first-fruits of the soil, the fairest of the flock, the finest of the herd; we will offer 'willingly what befits the circumstances in which we are placed, the resources at our command, the obligation under which we are laid.'

The Redemption of Christ.

Now, whatever incentives are supplied by the providence of God to intelligent and appropriate giving, all are greatly strengthened and emphasized by the love of God in the redemption of Jesus Christ. When St. Paul would present to the church at Corinth a motive to liberality of overwhelming force, he referred to the infinite grace and condescension of Christ: 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich' (1 Cor. viii. 9). No appeal to a Christian mind could rest on stronger grounds. If the stupendous condescension of Christ, in becoming poor that we may be made rich, does not touch the nature, soften the heart, and enlarge the sympathies of men, nothing can or will. The redemption of Christ is the greatest revelation of love God has given to man; the love of Christ is the strongest constraint to a new and noble life men know to-day; the grace of Christ is the most perfect exemplification of self-sacrifice ever

exhibited, and the most powerful incentive to humanitarian service men ever knew, or will know. Let men contemplate the work of Christ, the grace of Christ, the death of Christ, and that must be a hard heart that does not respond with prompt and enthusiastic devotion. 'To the Christian mind Christ is all; the measure of all things; the standard and the reference. All things centre in Him. The liberality asked from the Corinthian Church was the giving of money; the liberality of Christ was the giving of Himself. Sacrifice was the law of both.'[1] This, then, is the supreme motive to a large, generous, continuous liberality — the example of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the redemption of Christ, coupled with the goodness and faithfulness of God. Other motives may have their place and wield their influence, and justly so; but the providence of God, and the redemption of Christ, must ever remain the one sure, authoritative, and unalterable basis of appeal for a large-hearted generosity. These great facts never change, and the lessons they teach, and the obligations they impose, apply to all men, and all time, and all conditions of human life.

Men may sometimes give because it is customary or fashionable, or because others in their station or society or neighbourhood do. Some may give for purposes of display, 'to be seen of men,' or to please a friend, or to secure some return. But the supreme motive is subject to no changing

[1] F. W. Robertson.

fashions or dispositions, or even circumstances. The grace of Christ never fails, the goodness of God endureth for ever, and hence the primary motive to intelligent and generous giving can never cease to apply.

And if this motive is allowed its due weight, the response can hardly fail to be prompt and enthusiastic. As the sun, pouring his beams over land and sea, attracts by the process of evaporation immense volumes of water into the air, so the Sun of Righteousness, shedding His rays on devout, appreciative, sensitive natures, will draw out their gratitude and service and gifts in glad recognition and praise. The question would then be: 'How much can I give?' and never: 'How little can I get off with giving?' The return of devotion and generosity to God will accord with the ceaseless reception of abounding goodness and grace from God.

FOR MAN'S SAKE

When our Lord's critics complained of the waste of costly ointment with which He had been anointed, and suggested that it might have been sold, and the proceeds 'given to the poor,' he replied: 'The poor always ye have with you.' This is true still, alike in the fact which it describes and the suggestions it makes. Objects of Christian charity are always with us. The sick, the sorrowing, the oppressed and the helpless, the widow and the orphan will always claim

the sympathy and help of Christian men; and this both on humanitarian and Christian grounds. We owe a duty to each other as members of the same human family. On the broadest lines of personal responsibility, wherever men need help that we can give, the fact of need constitutes a claim; and especially is this so in regard to those of our own land, or town, or neighbourhood. Human society imposes its obligations as well as confers its privileges. 'No man liveth to himself'; no man can, and no man ought to try, as this means a refusal to recognize the duties of citizenship or the claims of humanity. To excuse one's self from helping others on the cold, hard plea, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' is to display reprehensible selfishness. The lessons of our Lord's parable of the good Samaritan are lessons for all time. The obligations of men to help each other rest on the broad basis of their common humanity, and are independent of national antagonisms, social barriers or caste prejudice. The Samaritan helped the robbed, bruised, bleeding Jew because he was a brother man in need. He belonged to an unfriendly nation, it is true, but he was a man; and the claims of manhood conquered the antagonism of nationality; and hence, as he saw him lie, wounded and helpless, 'he came where he was, and bound up his wounds' and 'took care of him.' There have always been, and for a long time are likely to be, vast differences in the conditions of men. There are those who have

On Humanitarian Grounds.

plenty and those in want; those capable and successful, and those inefficient and helpless; those in perfect health, with all their faculties and functions, and those in sickness, deformity, blindness, insanity, slavery, degradation; and it is one of the noblest instincts and impulses of humanity that the strong should help the weak, the prosperous those in adversity, the healthy those that are sick and feeble. For the sake of the needy—those who want, and wait for the help we can give—we should cultivate generous sentiments and do kindly deeds.

On Christian Grounds.

But much additional force is given to these considerations when our obligations to each other are emphasized by the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ. The mission of Christ was a mission of redemption, alike to the bodies and the souls of men. He came from heaven to earth, to win a vagrant world back to God, to create men anew, to regenerate humanity, and lift it again into filial relation and likeness to the Father. And yet, with this unique spiritual mission, how much of the time, energy, thought of the priceless three years of His earthly ministry He devoted to helping men physically and socially. And He calls upon all His disciples to-day, for humanity's sake, and for His own sake, to do likewise. In that most circumstantial account of the events of the coming judgment day (Matt. xxv.), the test that divides men is not said to be creed or rank, but practical beneficence. To the righteous He will then say: 'I was hungry, and ye

fed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me.' And to the surprised inquiry of those thus addressed as to when these kindly acts were done to Him, He answers, in words of infinite significance: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me' (v. 45). What a far-reaching deduction is this! Of what a variety of applications it is capable! Service rendered to humanity in any form, under any condition, at any time, for Christ's sake, is, in Christ's view, rendered to Himself. He allies Himself with humanity in its poverty, sickness, degradation, helplessness; and He accounts kindly deeds done to man for His sake as done to Himself; and affirms that amid the solemnities of the judgment day it will not be power, wealth, learning that will differentiate men, but whether they have, or whether they have not, been practically beneficent.

On three great lines of services our gifts to humanity may run. Social: Feeding the hungry, raising the fallen, sheltering the defenceless and inspiring with hope the despairing. Educational: Instructing the ignorant, and training men for the great duties of life. Religious: Man's capacity for religion is his greatest gift, his need for religion his most urgent want, his devotion to religion and its duties his greatest achievement. For man's sake, then, for the great objects of philanthropy, our resources should be laid under tribute in systematic and proportionate gifts.

FOR OUR OWN SAKE

There is nothing so important to a man as his own character. His character is himself, the qualities that make up his personality, the one thing that enters into his very being, and from which he cannot divest himself, now or ever. His riches may flee away, his friends fail him, his health decline, but his character never leaves him, in time or eternity. There can, therefore, be no work so important to a man as the building of his character. And this work is mainly his own. He is what the habits he forms, the qualities he cultivates, the life he lives make him. 'Every person has two educations, one which he receives from others, and one, more important, which he gives himself.' Perhaps few things test character, or mould character, like money. To some men the acquisition of wealth is a great boon; it carries with it a sense of obligation to God, steadies character, and widens the sphere of service and influence. It is their servant and not their master, and they use it for wise and worthy ends. To other men wealth is an unmitigated curse; it fills with pride, gives the means of pleasure and dissipation, and leads to moral and social deterioration and decay. To some men the accumulation of riches means moral and spiritual ruin. As poor men, they are humble, considerate, devout; as rich men, they become worldly, arrogant, irreligious. Few men can maintain simplicity of character and life amid increasing wealth; and fewer still if they fail to recognize

with their wealth the claims of God and man. Wealth tries men; and the regular dedication of a specific and increasing proportion of it to Christian uses cannot fail to exercise an ennobling influence on character. It will do this in many ways.

Reminds of the Giver.

It will constantly remind of the source of all success in life. The memorable words of King David will not be forgotten: 'All things come from Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee' (1 Chron. xxix. 14). Temporal prosperity, as one of God's gifts, should evoke adequate recognition. 'It is God that giveth thee power to get wealth' (Deut. viii. 18). And yet how common it is for men with increasing wealth to forget God. They become absorbed in business; they are greedy of gain; they exult in their success; they have no time for religious duty; God is not in all their thoughts. But if men 'honour the Lord with their substance, and the first-fruits of all their increase,' they are bound to remember God as the giver of it. And hence pride is checked, simplicity of character preserved, devotion maintained, and the 'good hand of God' gladly acknowledged.

Fosters a Sense of Responsibility.

It fosters a spirit of responsibility for the right use of God's gifts. Such a man realizes that he is a steward, and that one day the call, 'Give an account of thy stewardship,' will come. He remembers the caution: 'If riches increase, set not thine heart on them.' He knows that 'the love of money is a root

of many evils.' And hence he seeks to estimate it at its just value and use it for right objects. This sense of responsibility cannot fail to be of incalculable service to any man climbing the giddy heights of worldly prosperity. It warns of the precipice over which multitudes have fallen; and it guides along the safe, sure path of fidelity and obedience. Whatever a man's station in life, and whatever his resources, a keen sense of stewardship steadies and preserves him.

It terminates the inevitable and sometimes painful conflict between personal interest and Christian duty. How often, unless this principle of storing for God be adopted, does this controversy arise between a man's higher and lower self; between his desire to give and his eagerness to save; between the call of philanthropy and the demands of self-interest! That conflict occurs whenever an appeal for help is presented. Storing for God strangles that conflict at its birth, and definitely ends the controversy between the calls of God on the one hand, and the suggestions of the devil on the other. If we have already 'laid by in store,' we know at once how the account stands, and what is the Lord's portion; and if the object presented to us commends itself to our approval, how far we can assist. The battle is fought and won long before the time for distribution comes; and when it does come, giving is an easy and pleasant duty. And what a gain this is! It broadens and enriches a man's whole nature.

Terminates Conflict between Self-interest and Duty.

It checks the growth of the spirit of avarice. To many men this would be a priceless boon. They are naturally acquisitive, and the passion to get and keep grows with every success in life. Nothing can save such from cold, hard, dry materialism but generous, religious giving. This is its one and only preventative amid increasing wealth. Nothing can curb, control, conquer avarice but generosity. This seems to be God's remedy. He counteracts the poison of greed by the grace of liberality. 'If a man is growing *large in wealth,* nothing but constant giving can prevent him growing *small in soul.*' Few sights are more pitiable than a miser, and yet how they abound both in the world and the Church; and the race will not become extinct till men learn the lesson of systematic and proportionate giving.

Checks the Growth of Avarice.

It links to every kind of Christian work. This keeps the heart tender and sympathetic. It shows how wealth can be used for the noblest and most humane ends; how it can help to wipe away the tears of sorrow, alleviate human suffering, dispel ignorance, invigorate every institution of philanthropy, and send the messenger of truth to the ends of the earth. It can thus be an angel of light, a veritable messenger of salvation.

Links to Christly Work.

On every ground, then, for God's sake, for others' sake, for our own sake, storing for God should be our method of preparing for giving to God.

THE ADVANTAGES OF SYSTEMATIC AND PROPORTIONATE GIVING

CHAPTER XII

ADVANTAGES OF SYSTEMATIC GIVING

It has been said that 'there are two prominent features of the religion of the present day most painful and unsatisfactory — the absence of any definite and adequate scale of contribution among Christians at large, and the general failure of dedication by men of wealth of a duly augmenting portion of their ever-increasing possessions.' If this statement is accurate—and there is ample proof that it is—the facts that it describes cannot fail to produce grave consequences both to the Church and the world; and no worthier work can be attempted than to place this great question of the stewardship of wealth, and the conscientious support of Christian institutions, on a right basis in the intelligence, the conscience, the heart, and the habits of Christian men. Horace Bushnell once said: 'One more revival, only one more, is needed—the revival of Christian stewardship—the consecration of the money power of the

Church unto God; and when that revival comes, the Kingdom of God will come in a day. You can no more prevent it than you can hold back the tides of the ocean.' It cannot be out of place, if this witness is true, to insist with the force of emphatic reiteration on this great duty and privilege of Christian life. The advantages of this method of giving (1) to the contributor himself; (2) to the Church he serves; (3) to the world at large.

TO THE CONTRIBUTOR

To the individual donor the advantages of principle and system in his gifts are neither few nor small.

1. It will encourage habits of order and method in the arrangements of life. In fixing a definite proportion to be given, men are compelled to review their circumstances, to regulate personal and domestic expenditure after the Lord's portion has been appropriated, and not before that is done; and hence lessons of order, method, economy, forethought are insensibly but effectively taught. And these are lessons of incalculable value in ministering to success in life. A man methodical and orderly in his accounts can hardly be a spendthrift. It is the visionaries, the muddlers, that rush blindly to financial disaster. Many a man can date the first upward movement of his rise in life to learning these lessons by practising these methods of giving. A young man in humble circumstances, on one occasion promised

Encourage Habits of Method.

£10 towards the building fund of a proposed Methodist chapel. He had no money, and his rash promise exposed him to the gentle reproaches of his cautious wife. He, however, began at once to economize and save to redeem his promise, and in due course it was fully honoured. That event became the turning-point in his life. He began by seeking to economize and save that he might give to the Lord's cause; he continued to economize and save to improve his own position, and he acquired a competency. The gift of that £10 was the best investment he ever made. It yielded a magnificent return in the habits it fostered, the ideals it revealed, the independency to which it led. And this case is typical of thousands of others.

2. It will secure the divine approval and contribute to commercial success. 'Honour the Lord with thy substance and the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy fats burst out with new wine' (Prov. iii. 9). Here we have a definite command to recognize the divine goodness, honour the divine claim, obey the divine injunction, by the cheerful, periodical, regular dedication of a definite portion of our income to God and His cause; here, also, we have an equally definite promise that this course will result in abundant prosperity, that the blessing of God shall so attend our steps as to secure success on the amplest scale. And is not this true to life? Is it

Will attract the divine Blessing.

not proved by the most abundant evidence. 'A well-known philanthropist, who had started life by setting apart a tenth, tells how, when his income rose from hundreds to thousands, it became to him a fierce temptation to reduce the proportion. In the struggle he took the matter to the Throne of Grace, and not until he had *increased the tenth to a seventh* did he obtain the victory. He refers to that hour as the crisis in his life. Few men have enjoyed since then greater prosperity, but, as he aptly says: "The struggle was whether gold or my Master's claim should rule my heart."'

This is the result, not the motive. It brings this about, though it must not be done with that object. Virtue must be pursued for its own sake, but nevertheless, virtue favours success. Prosperity is the product of virtue, but not its motive; and prosperity follows the divine benediction on well-directed energy and effort. 'The blessing of God, it maketh rich.' How prone men are to ignore this, and yet nothing is surer. In a thousand ways, the 'blessing of God' can enrich life; and that blessing is promised to those who 'honour the Lord' in the way prescribed.

Suitable Recognition of God's Goodness.

3. It forms one method of suitably recognizing God's goodness. 'The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.' 'Thou crowneth the year with Thy goodness.' Every good gift of life comes from 'the Father of lights.' Suitable recognition will be gladly made by every nature that is intelligent, appreciative, and devout; and that

not by words only, but by service and by gifts. Thank-offerings to God will express our gratitude for His unfailing and abounding goodness; and this form is often the most effective and practical that our gratitude can take. Praise offered in the sanctuary is fitly accompanied by 'gifts' placed on the altar. They are two parts of one service, and giving will supply reality, buoyancy, and acceptability to the lofty strains of our songs of praise. Under the Jewish law, some latitude was left to individual worshippers as to the offerings they should bring. The free-will of the worshipper was left some scope for its action. But God often required specific gifts under specific conditions. So to-day, God asks intelligent, definite, proportionate contributions to His cause, as the expression of our gratitude and devotion.

4. It will enable a donor to ascertain exactly the relation of the amount of his gifts to what he has, to what he receives, to the circumstances in which he is placed, to the resources at his command, and to the obligations under which he is laid. Till this relation is discovered our gifts are unintelligent, undiscriminating, and hence, less acceptable to God, and less beneficial to ourselves than they might be. God asks from His human creatures an intelligent service, not a mere blind devotion. His yoke is easy, His burden is light, His service perfect freedom; but His Word emphatically teaches that the offerings of His people should be given by intellects informed, and

Donor will know Proportion of Gift to Income.

by hearts devout; and if so, the measure of the gift will be in accord with the circumstances of the giver. Under the old law, the costliness of the offering ranged from costliness of the bullock to the cheapness of a pair of turtle doves or a couple of young pigeons, according to the resources of the offerer. The offering of a bullock was far beyond the power of a poor man, just as a pair of turtle doves was equally below the obligation of a rich man. What was fitting to the circumstances of the giver was the condition of acceptance. And is not this equally so to-day. The practical wisdom of the old arrangement must be carried over into the larger life, the fuller knowledge, the wider opportunities of the new dispensation. Christian giving should be controlled by intelligent conviction, religious principles and enlightened conscience, and as such it becomes an act of worship, an exercise of devotion.

5. It makes giving a pleasant duty, a delightful privilege. It is to be feared most of the giving of to-day is not of this kind. It is felt to be a burden and a bore, rather than a duty or a privilege; it is the unwilling conformity to usage, example or fashion, a grudging response to appeals for help. There is no willing mind, no generous impulse, no open hand. It is not spontaneous, but of constraint, and hence it is defective, both in the amount which is given and the spirit which prompts it. The one corrective of this grave defect is storing for God;

Makes Giving a Pleasure.

laying by in store as God prospers; not waiting for any appeal, worthy or otherwise, but quietly setting aside a given portion of our income for God's cause. This is the crux of the matter. At that point the battle is lost or won. If lost, the burden and difficulty and conflict continue, and perhaps increase; if won, all is easy and pleasant. Once the claim of God is recognized, and our natural selfishness conquered, giving has lost its terrors. The amount having been laid aside, stored, consecrated, we gladly welcome open doors through which our gifts may enter on their beneficent ministry. The whole situation is changed, the entire atmosphere cleared; the money is no longer ours, but the Lord's; and our only care now is how we can best make it serve the purposes of religion and philanthropy. What a transformation in our church life would this bring about! No more grumbling about giving, no more complaints about too many collections. The gifts become part of worship, as real and as ennobling as the exercises of prayer and praise.

6. It brings the donor into direct touch with Christian work, religious and humanitarian alike. There is always danger that a man's life should be confined to fixed grooves from which it rarely escapes, that it should run uniformly in certain hard ruts. The effect of this is restricted sympathies, limited outlook, a narrow world, while a vast area of life full of interest and instruction is left unexplored.

Brings into touch with Christian Work.

Diligence in business is to be commended, fidelity to primary duty is a universal obligation; but, in the intervals of business claims, life may be touched at many other points with great advantage. A man's life is broadened and elevated by association with the exercises of religion, with art, science, literature, the duties of citizenship, social life and its problems, the claims and services of philanthropy. In the wise distribution of the Lord's money, men are often brought into touch with spheres and agencies of humanitarian service of which they had previously no knowledge or even conception. Such givers will not wait for appeals to be made to them, but 'the cause that they know not they will search out.' They will ascertain what the needs of religion and humanity are, and as they note the worth and urgency of the work being done, will gladly help as they are able. And the knowledge thus obtained will invest life with a new interest, and Christian work with a new dignity and attractiveness; and it will infuse a new joy into our hearts as we realize we are 'workers together with God' in His great purposes of salvation for the lost, servants of Jesus Christ in His mission and message of mercy to men.

Will sanctify all Life.

7. It will sanctify the entire life and afford a welcome retrospect when the eventide of life is reached. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.' 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which

are His.' The highest experiences of life are those in which the law of God is the supreme rule, the love of God the great inspiration, the glory of God the chief end; and by honouring the Lord with our substance, by taking Him into partnership in our business, we elevate and sanctify every other department of life. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy steps.' Give to God the portion to which He has a right, the glad and generous thank-offering of an enlightened and filial heart; give freely, constantly, religiously; consecrate it to the cause of Christ and humanity, and every other part of life will feel its elevating influence. Sympathy will be deepened, the sense of obligation to God become clearer, and the desire for worthy service for humanity increase in intensity. And when the sun of life is setting in the west, what will be the point in life's review on which the mind will dwell with the deepest gratitude and satisfaction, as far as earthly possessions go? Will it be what we have acquired? what we have hoarded — the accumulated accretions of a lifetime? what we have spent on personal gratification or pleasure? Will it not be what we have given? Will not that be the bright light in the picture? That will be 'the treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.'

TO THE CHURCH

The benediction that this systematic and proportionate giving would bring to the Church it would be practically impossible to over-estimate.

1. It would perfect her character. Is not one of the gravest defects of the Church a want of broad sympathies, of liberal ideas, of generous gifts? To the Corinthian Church St. Paul wrote: 'Therefore as ye abound in everything . . . see that ye abound in this grace also.' They had many great qualities of Christian character, 'utterance and knowledge, earnestness and love,' and they abounded in these; they needed one other quality to round off a complete whole—'this grace also,' the grace of a Christian sympathy with others, and a Christian generosity in assisting them. 'This grace also.' To how many churches of Christendom does this counsel apply? They, too, abound in many qualities—they are earnest and devout, diligent and upright; they need 'this grace also,' and to 'abound in it.' There opens out before them wide and inviting fields of service; they have immense resources on which to draw in entering them; but they fail to seize the great opportunity because they lack 'this grace also.' The grave defect in their character is want of the spirit of self-sacrifice. They have no just sense of the stewardship of wealth; of the obligation to give as God prospers, of self-denial in order to serve and

Will perfect Character.

give. This is a common and fatal flaw. Correct that, and you quicken every other faculty and vitalize every other power. 'This grace also' would complete the character of the Church, and enable her to 'adorn the doctrine of God, her Saviour, in all things.'

2. It would complete her equipment for service. What is the most urgent need of the Church to-day to give her complete fitness to interpret and represent Jesus Christ to men, and to execute the mission He has placed in her hands? Is it a higher training of her ministers? or better methods of work? or a more elaborate organization? or a higher social status? Has she not a more urgent need still?—the spirit of consecration, alike of character, capacity and gifts. That is what the Church needs to complete her equipment for the noblest service on the widest area the world has ever seen. She has immense resources of wealth practically untouched, that need to be drawn on and used for the more efficient maintenance of Christian agencies at home, and for the sending of the Gospel to the end of the earth. Probably the Church never had such financial strength as she has to-day, and certainly never were there such openings for service as present themselves to us now. Why are not these resources more largely consecrated to this inviting service? That is a grave problem, the solution of which would herald the dawn of a day of untold power and blessing to the Church; and

Will complete equipment for Service.

it will be solved when every disciple will give 'as God prospers him.' This would place the vast resources of the Church at the disposal of the Church for the work of the Church, and would complete her equipment for her unique mission of preaching the gospel of Christ to all the nations of the earth.

3. It would open the way to the widest spiritual success. What a suggestive question we have in the prophesy of Malachi, with an equally suggestive answer and promise attached. 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.' 'In tithes and offerings.' Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse' (ch. iii. 10).

Will open the way to Spiritual Success.

Here we have a startling accusation: The Jews had robbed God by withholding from Him His rights, the 'tithes' which they were bound by law to pay; and the 'offerings' which were to be the expression of gratitude and devotion. Then follows a merciful appeal: 'Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house.' Let the backslidden nation repent; let the neglected duty be performed; let restitution be made for the wrong done; and then the way will be open for forgiveness, restoration, abundant blessing. Then comes the gracious promise: 'I will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing there shall not be room enough to receive it.' Is not this a lesson for to-day? Does it not indicate a law and

describe a condition of spiritual progress that belongs to all time? In the early Church its harmony, generosity, devotion gave it all but irresistible power. Is not the same spirit of self-sacrifice the condition of power and progress still. Bring in tithes and offerings. Consecrate to God all your resources, wealth as well as hand and intellect, and the windows of heaven shall open once again, and send a richer shower of blessing than ever fell on ancient Israel, a shower that shall reach all nations, and everywhere make the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice.

TO THE WORLD

The effect of the general discharge of this great duty on the world at large could not fail to be most marked and most beneficial. It would act in three ways.

1. The consecration and self-sacrifice of the Church must command the esteem, confidence and admiration of the world. When the world saw that the spirit of Christ was supreme in the Church, conquering its selfishness and evoking the glad consecration of its wealth to objects of Christian beneficence, it could not withhold its respect and approval. The Church has ever been powerful in the proportion that she has incarnated the mind of Christ. Not rank or organization, but the spirit

Will win Confidence and Esteem.

of Christ in her glory and strength. Then she is a living epistle, known and read of all men. Christ's purity, Christ's sympathy, Christ's self-sacrifice would make the Church to-day, as ever, invincible. And no more conclusive proof of the possession of this attainment could be exhibited than the conquest of selfishness in the systematic and proportionate consecration of her wealth to God.

2. The vast resources released for Christian work, if this plan were general, would greatly increase missionary agencies everywhere. How far we seem from the period when the Gospel shall be preached to every creature, when the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of God and His Christ! And yet that day will surely come. And nothing could do more to bring it on than a baptism of Christian generosity. Christ gave Himself; cannot we give of our material wealth with a freeness and fulness such as we have never before known? How feeble is the aggressive agency of the Church! How straitened its circumstances! How timid its counsels! How restricted its operations! Loud calls, 'Come over and help us,' come from every land. In every country of the world the way is open for the message of salvation. Thousands are ready to go. Why then drag the chariot-wheels of missionary enterprise so heavily? Want of funds, and that want the Church could easily supply. Let the Church 'give as God prospers,' and missionary agencies will multiply on every hand, and

Will release vast Resources.

the salvation of Zion shall go forth like brightness, and as a lamp that burneth.

3. This larger generosity would infuse a new spirit of energy and enterprise into every type of aggressive Christian work. How cautiously we move! How timid our plans! How feeble our arm! Why? Limited and stationary income, fear lest expenditure exceed revenue. Hence paralysis of effort, enterprize and enthusiasm. The Church's gifts could change this in a day. Let the Church give as she can and ought, and new hope will enter every declining institution of religion or philanthropy, new energy throb through every dispirited worker, and new light break on the world.

Such are the immense advantages which this divine method of ecclesiastical finance promises to the Church and the world. Will you make it your own? This method never fails.

TESTIMONIES

The following testimonies are extracted from a pamphlet on *Christian Giving*, written by Mr. Thomas Kane of Chicago:

These testimonies are taken from thousands of similar import. No conflicting testimony has ever been received, though the question: *Have you ever known any exceptions to the rule that God prospers in their temporal affairs those who honour Him by setting apart one-tenth of their income to His service?* has

been asked of three or four million persons during the last seven or eight years. Could human evidence be stronger?

1. 'I know two families who testify to their *much greater gratification in giving on this plan*, having more to give, and being blessed in their temporal affairs since adopting it.'

2. 'I began the tithing system when a freshman at Oberlin, twelve years ago. I was poor, working my own way, and I found it *a constant burden to decide what I ought to give, and a constant temptation to scrimp my beneficence.* I decided that as long as I could, in justice to my creditors, I would lay aside a tenth for the Lord. From that day it has been a delight to me.'

3. 'During a recent pastorate in Baltimore City, I was struck with the fact that the one business man not seriously affected by the hard times was the solitary individual who gave proportionately.'

4. 'I have one man in the bounds of my charge, and he is getting rich. He says he *never saved anything until he adopted that plan*, and would be afraid to abandon it now, lest God should take away his property and give it to a more faithful steward.'

5. 'I have been in the active work of a pastor thirty-seven years, and have been an observer of the results of Christian giving; and I have never known one case where a Christian faithfully and uniformly gave conscientiously and proportionately who was not highly prospered in his temporal affairs. These

are the very men God can trust with earthly goods.'

6. 'I have a member having a wife and three children who sacredly lays away one-tenth *of his wages* as soon as received, and who finds God's blessing upon him as a result. He declares that he would not, under any consideration, return to the haphazard method of dispensing his means for religious uses.'

7. 'I have practised giving the tenth of my income to the Lord for years, and find that I give more money, and give it *more cheerfully*, and I think more intelligently, than before.'

8. 'I began about eighteen years ago, and while I have been steadily prosperous, have never seen the year *when there was not apparently some strong reason why I should not pay the tenth that year.* The habit or plan has been the influence that has carried me through.'

9. 'I have intimate personal relations with a number of men in middle life in the city who have adopted proportionate giving. Some are in business for themselves; others on salary. Without exception they are prosperous, and as a rule, they attribute their prosperity in a very large degree to the adoption of this system. As one of them expressed it: "It pays as an investment, and is a fortune in business."'

These are remarkable testimonies, and they might be multiplied almost indefinitely. They afford

ample proof that systematic and proportionate giving is the safest, wisest and most successful method, and is worthy of being universally adopted.

CHAPTER XIII

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

THUS far we have endeavoured to state fully and clearly the obligation of the 'tithe' as the measure of Christian liberality, subject to such modifications as the circumstances of the donor may seem to demand. If the income is small, and domestic and other expenses relatively large, then this proportion may be more than can be reasonably expected; but if the income is large, then this proportion may fall much below what ought to be given. Each contributor should give careful consideration to the subject, and in the light of the teaching of Scripture, the obligation under which he is laid to the 'Giver of all,' and the claims of religion and philanthropy intelligently decide the proportion that meets his case. Reasons have also been given in support of the principle of systematic and proportionate giving, and of the proportion of the tithe in ordinary conditions. What objections can be urged against these claims?

1. *Inability.*—'We cannot afford it.' This can, however, only apply to the tithe as a proportion; because if we give anything at all, it is some proportion of our income, and it is surely much better that we should ascertain what that proportion is, than that we should

We can't afford it.

give in a fitful, haphazard fashion. If, however, we cannot afford the 'tithe,' we ought not to give it; but that decision should only be reached after the most conscientious investigation, and never 'as a cloak for covetousness.' A Christian man, sincerely wishful to do his duty in this matter, will carefully inquire whether his expenditure is fixed on a right scale, if it does not leave him a reasonable proportion with which to honour the Lord; he will ask whether every luxury of life is to be maintained, and the cause of God starved; and he will consider whether the claims of religion should not come under review when, or *before*, the expenditure is fixed, and not *after*, so that the Lord's portion may be part of the plan of the economics of life rather than an accident of it. Men sometimes say, 'Oh, we give what we can spare,' a phrase that indicates clearly enough an entirely erroneous view of Christian responsibility, and a grave omission in the arrangements of life. Is God's claim, then, to wait till every other is met, and then, if anything is left, to be grudgingly acknowledged? Is every personal necessity and luxury to be provided for before the claim of God comes into view at all? And if so, where comes in the spirit of self-sacrifice? Before we put in the plea of 'Can't afford,' we need to assure ourselves, by a review of all the circumstances of life, that it is a statement of fact, and not a confession that God's claims have been inconsiderately ignored, or a cloak for our own niggardliness. Many of the things that

greatly increase the expense of life add little to its real welfare or pleasure, and not a few 'destroy its comfort, manliness, respectability, freshness and facility. I do not say that these things have not their place and propriety; but I do say this emphatically, that the tenth part of the expense which is sacrificed in domestic vanities, if not absolutely and meaninglessly lost in domestic discomfort and incumbrances, would, if collectively offered and wisely employed, build a marble church in every town in England.'[1] It is believed, therefore, that the plea, 'We can't afford the tenth,' would apply in much fewer cases than is generally supposed, if the divine claim was recognized at the right time, and expenditure determined after that claim had been acknowledged.

But while this applies to cases where frugality and care are needed to balance income and expenditure, what shall he said in regard to cases where an easy margin is left, and men are acquiring, if not a fortune, at least a competency? Here the plea, 'We can't afford it,' can have no legitimate place, and to urge it is a mere pretence; and yet there is ground for the surmise that amongst this class are the most frequent offenders. It is generally acknowledged that in most Christian communities the contributions of the poorer members are relatively on a more generous scale than the contributions of the richer; so that the proportion that the richer

[1] Ruskin, *Lamp of Sacrifice.*

imagine that they 'can't afford' to give is cheerfully given by the poorer.

2. *The 'tithe' is not definitely enjoined in the New Testament.*—This is no doubt true, but is this objection pertinent or weighty as against proportionate and systematic giving generally, or even to the 'tenth' as a definite principle of assessment? That the tithe was a law obligatory on the Jew admits of no question. But if the Jew gave the tithe, what ought the Christian to give? Is not Christianity an expansion of Judaism? Does it not raise spiritual life to a higher plane of knowledge, privilege, blessing? And must not this elevation of spiritual experience carry with it higher obligations, opportunities, duties? And though the 'tithe' may not have been definitely re-enacted in the new dispensation, is the obligation to acknowledge God by our gifts less personal, direct and urgent under Christianity than under Judaism? Is it not more so? And if the Jew gave the tithe, can the Christian give less and be blameless? If the teaching of this lecture is true, giving to God is not so much a matter of law as of love, the expression of the soul's gratitude to the 'Giver of all,' and the desire to use material resources for the well-being of humanity and the extension of Christ's kingdom; and the wish of a grateful heart will be, not how to fall below, but how to go beyond, any mere statutory obligation. Its interrogatory will be, 'Lord, what will thou

Tithe not enjoined in New Testament.

have me to do?' And the highest commendation it will aspire after will be the Lord's commendation of the woman who anointed His body to the burial, 'She hath done what she could.' And further, is it not reasonable to infer that the obligation of the 'tithe,' like the 'Sabbath,' is tacitly assumed in the New Testament, and therefore did not need official re-enactment. In the new and larger life of Christianity, it could not be that the privilege and duty of the consecration of wealth to God had become less obligatory than in Judaism. To maintain this is to claim that Christianity 'had lowered a virtue,' whereas the whole teaching of Scripture is to the contrary. 'If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.' Moral obligations have been enjoined under all dispensations of divine truth; humane dispositions have ever accorded with the divine will; kindly service to the needy has always secured the divine approval; and no grateful and devout heart will admit the contention that the absence of any re-enactment of this ancient law of 'the tithe' is a warranty for neglecting the duty it defines, or ignoring the obligation it imposes.

3. *The giving of a fixed proportion of income makes giving formal and mechanical.*— That there is some danger of this is no doubt true, just as there is the same danger in regard to any religious duty that we regularly perform. In human nature there is a universal tendency to lose the spirit while the letter

Systematic Giving may become formal.

is retained, to preserve the form and lose the power. We may maintain the form of prayer, and yet fail to retain its spirituality and fervour. We may regularly partake of the 'emblems of the Lord's Cross and passion,' and yet not learn all the solemn lessons of the Eucharist, or appropriate to ourselves all the benefits of Christ's atoning death. But must we give up these great duties because of the fact that they may become formal? Is the duty of giving more exposed to this peril than praying? Is it not easier indeed for a man to become formal in his devotions than in his gifts? The powerful constraint of the love of God and of humanity are essential to make a man truly liberal, and there is not greater peril of men lapsing into formality in this duty than in other duties of Christian life. Does not the method of 'storing for God'—religiously setting aside for His service a definite portion of our income—keep ever before us our obligation to Him, express, and in expressing intensify, our sense of gratitude, and foster, rather than chill, the true spirit of generosity? It may be that where 'the tenth is given regularly, the spirit of generosity, under cover of this, may be permitted to die away.' But is this half so likely to occur as where giving is uncertain, impulsive, unintelligent, haphazard? One of the most urgent needs of modern Christian life is to learn *the habit of giving*, and nothing will more readily teach this lesson than to make giving regular and religious, systematic and proportionate.

4. *Men will give money to God instead of giving themselves.*—This may occur, but is it likely? And is proportionate giving specially exposed to this peril? Is it more so than fitful, uncertain giving? St. Paul commended the Macedonians in that they first 'gave themselves,' and then cheerfully sent their gifts. This is the divine order: Self first, then gifts. Under the old law the claim ran: 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' 'Burnt-offering' was no substitute for personal consecration. 'Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and in sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams!' Such were the words of Samuel to Saul, and they convey a lesson of supreme urgency to men in every age. God claims ourselves first, and then the consecration of our substance as the expression of our gratitude, and for the extension of His kingdom. It can surely be no valid objection to system and proportion in giving that men may pervert it to so foolish and fatal a delusion as to think that the giving of money may be a substitute for giving themselves to God. There is no good gift of life but may be put to ignoble uses; there is no privilege men enjoy but may be abused; there is no great truth but may be perverted to pernicious error; and if giving to God on some definite principle is pleaded as a reason for withholding one's self, the fault does not rest with the 'principle,'

Giving Money to God, and withholding Ourselves.

but with the fatal perversity with which it is misapplied.

5. *Giving will be made a substitute for personal service.*—This, too, is an undoubted peril, against which we need to guard. But is it not a peril to which all giving is exposed, and not a peril peculiar to systematic giving? Nothing can compensate for the want of personal service in the cause of Christ. Personal service is what Christ demands, what Christian life implies, what the world needs. The early followers of Christ were called to personal service: to discipleship first, that they might learn His will, and imbibe His spirit; then to apostleship, that they might execute His commission, proclaim His Gospel to men, and 'disciple all nations.' The early Church was a community of earnest workers. The disciples were of one mind and purpose; they 'went everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus.' And in every subsequent age the personal devotion and service of the membership of the Church have been the condition of its strength and progress. The giving of money to the cause of God is no substitute for personal service, where personal service is possible. But this is a caution, probably needed, in regard to all giving, and has no special reference to what is systematic and proportionate. And is it not a fact that the best givers in the Church to-day are usually the best workers, and the best workers the best givers? Those who have the clearest sense of

Giving, a substitute for Personal Service.

personal responsibility in regard to toil have usually the clearest sense of personal responsibility in regard to gifts. The demand of Christ is for the consecration of all our talents to His service—intellect and heart, energy and cash ; and each may be made to contribute its share to life's success, each supplementing all the rest, and none being substitute for any other.

There is necessarily a large field of Christian and philanthropic work where personal service may not be practicable, but which we may assist in cultivating by our gifts. Few can be missionaries to heathen lands, but all may, by their prayers, sympathies, and gifts, co-operate in the work of evangelizing the heathen world. Few, on their own initiative and at their own cost, can erect a house of prayer; but the combined efforts and gifts of a community may do it, and create a centre of worship and teaching and evangelism that shall be an untold benediction to multitudes for generations. Few can found and endow a hospital, an orphanage, or almshouses ; but the co-operation of the many may erect and maintain in their beneficent ministry such Christlike institutions. Money, however liberally it may be consecrated, cannot do everything. Alone it can do little, and it can be no substitute for personal service. But linked to personal service, laid under tribute for noble purposes, gratefully and wisely consecrated to the cause of God and humanity, it can be made a means and a ministry of abundant and abiding blessing to the physical and social, the moral and

spiritual welfare of men. Still, whilst it is no valid objection against systematic and proportionate giving, the caution against over-estimating the power of money is needful and timely. It can do much, rightly used; but it is no substitute for personal service, where personal service is possible; and however generous our contributions, they are but means towards great ends, the glory of God, and the well-being of humanity.

6. *Love of money.*—This is an objection seldom avowed, and yet probably it is behind all the rest, and more potent than any. 'The love of money is a root of many evils,' and, amongst them, a niggardly, grudging spirit in the maintenance of Christian institutions. Against avarice it seems useless to argue. Nothing but the grace of God can cure covetousness. And with increasing wealth the only preventative of love of money is generous and conscientious giving. The love of money is a foe to all giving, proportionate or not, and hence has no special application to the argument of this lecture.

Love of Money.

These are probably the chief objections to the method of giving for which we are pleading. Their authority and weight will be differently appraised by different minds; but they seem to have little validity against the principle of sustaining Christian and philanthropic institutions and agencies by the systematic and proportionate consecration of wealth to these great objects.

CHAPTER XIV

COVETOUSNESS, OR THE LOVE OF MONEY

ASSUMING, what has been contended for in this lecture, that systematic and proportionate giving is reasonable and scriptural in itself, and successful as a method of Church finance, the questions may not unnaturally arise: Why are not its benefits more generally acknowledged? and why has it not been universally adopted? Perhaps two answers may be given to that question: Want of information, and want of will. Though occupying a prominent place in the Scriptures, both Old Testament and New, it has not occupied the position in Christian teaching which is demanded alike by its intrinsic importance and by the needs of the Church. Its obligation ought to stand out clear and distinct in the preaching of the Gospel; it should be urged as a duty and a privilege on every member of the Church; and it ought to be inculcated as a matter of deep personal concern on the young people of our families and Sunday Schools. But many Christian teachers ignore it. Timidity, indifference, fear of giving offence may be the cause of this; but whatever

the cause, the result has been disastrous, and the Church has not had the light and guidance it has needed on this subject. But want of will is probably a much more formidable barrier to the general adoption of proportionate giving than want of information. Covetousness is in every age and under all conditions of life the greatest foe to the just consecration of wealth to God.

One of the most admonitory utterances that ever fell from the lips of our Lord related to this theme: 'Take heed, beware of covetousness.' He had been asked to adjudicate on a family dispute as to inheritance. He, however, refused, and refused in tones and terms of sternness and censure: 'Man, who made me a divider or a judge among you?' But He had read the appellant's heart, and found covetousness there; and hence this admonition, sustained and enforced by that declaration of transcendent significance: 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.' And this stern caution was further emphasized by a striking example of the folly and futility of covetousness: 'The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously.' His crops were so abundant that his barns could not store them. What shall he do? He will pull down his barns and build greater, and then presumptuously anticipate future years of ease and enjoyment. A fatal flaw, however, vitiates this too confident calculation. God is not in the arrangement. The

most important factor is ignored; and with the result that all ends in disastrous failure. 'God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided?' Ah, whose? 'Beware of covetousness.' This is a caution needed to-day—needed by the world, and needed by the Church. Mammon is the besetting sin of our age, against which every faithful monitor must raise an emphatic warning.

Covetousness: Its Nature.

What is covetousness? Is it not an eager, absorbing desire to possess material wealth, usually for its own sake, rather than for any worthy use to which it may be applied? It may refer to other things than material wealth, as the Tenth Commandment clearly proves—to anything belonging to others that we eagerly and illegitimately desire to possess. As, however, 'by the general consent of society, money is the representative of all property, and the key to all the avenues of enjoyment,' covetousness has come to mean, mainly, an inordinate craving for material wealth.

It may exist in many forms. One man loves money to hoard it; he is a miser. Another loves money to spend it, to squander it on the gratification of appetite and passion; he is a prodigal, and prodigality and avarice may exist in the same person. The Roman historian said of Cataline: 'He was covetous of the wealth of others, lavish of his own.'

Another loves money for the sake of the power which it gives, the position in society which it secures, the influence which it enables its possessor to exert in social, commercial, political life; he is ambitious. Broadly speaking, 'prodigal covetousness is the peril of youth, ambitious covetousness of manhood, miserly covetousness of old age.' But covetousness is the peril of every age of life, and of all ranks and conditions of men. The caution, 'Beware of covetousness,' is needed by all.

Covetousness has its root in selfishness. That is the source whence it springs. As 'selfishness is the prevailing form of sin, covetousness may be regarded as the prevailing form of selfishness.' St. Paul, describing the 'perilous times of the final apostasy, represents selfishness as the prolific root of all the evils that will then prevail, and covetousness as its first fruit'—'for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous.' A covetous man is solely concerned with self. He is a direct contrast to a beneficent man. The pivot of the one nature is self, of the other service. And covetousness is one of the gravest perils of the Church to-day. 'Countless facts compel me to confess,' said the late Hugh Price Hughes, 'that the love of money is a more disastrous curse than the love of drink. Drunkenness has slain its thousands, but Mammonism its ten thousands. What drunkenness is outside the pale of the Church, that Mammonism is inside.'

'Covetousness is native to our fallen nature; and,

unless religion vanquish it, in its indiscriminate ravages, it will vanquish religion. Other forms of selfishness are partial in their operation, being either confined to party, or at most, to an order of character; but covetousness is the sin of humanity; it is the name of a disease which knows no distinction of class or party—the epidemic malady of our race.'

'Gold is the only power which receives universal homage. It is worshipped in all lands without a temple, and by all classes without a single hypocrite; and often it has been able to boast of having armies for its priesthood, and hecatombs of human victims for its sacrifices. Where war has slain its thousands, gain has slaughtered its millions; for while the former operates with the local and fitful terrors of an earthquake, the destructive influence of the latter is universal and unceasing.'[1]

This is a subject of more than ordinary importance to the Christians of this land; for while no part of the world is exempt from the peril of covetousness, 'a commercial nation like Britain is more liable to its debasement than any other.' 'Every nation has its idol: in some countries that idol is pleasure; in others glory; in others liberty; but the name of our idol is Mammon. The shrines of others indeed are not neglected, but it must be conceded that money is the mightiest of al our idol-gods.'[2] A special obligation thus rests upon the Christians of Britain to be on their guard against this insidious foe, to

[1] *Mammon*, Dr. HARRIS, pp. 77, 78. [2] *Mammon*, p. 81.

detect and expose it in all varied disguises, and by every means prevent its gaining ascendency over them.

Its Deceptiveness.

Whilst covetousness is one of the commonest of sins, how few ever acknowledge that they participate in it. To the question, 'Who is covetous?' rare, indeed, is the reply: 'I am the man.' Easy as it is to demonstrate the prevalence of covetousness, it is a task of extreme difficulty to bring home to the consciences of individual men their own share in it. 'It was remarked by St. Francis de Sales, who was greatly resorted to in his day as a confessor, that *none confess the sin of covetousness.*' It disguises itself in so many different forms that but few detect its presence and its peril. To one man it calls itself *industry*, and business is pursued with an eagerness that absorbs all his energies, and leaves neither time nor disposition for the cultivation of religious life and the rendering of Christian service. To another it calls itself *economy*, and he rigorously refuses all gifts or expenditure that do not promise some immediate and commercial return. To another it is named *forethought*, and he has no rest till he has made the amplest provision for the future. He acts 'as if Providence had vacated His throne and deserted His charge, and he takes on himself all the cares and burdens belonging to his state; and often his anxiety to gain a competence goes on to the moment when a competence for him means only the expenses of

his funeral.' In a hundred different guises it presents itself to men, and the utmost vigilance is essential to detect and defeat it. Perhaps the one infallible test of covetousness is to ascertain the place that riches occupy in our estimation. 'To value riches is not to be covetous. They are the gift of God, and like every gift of His, good in themselves, and capable of a good use. To over-value riches—to put them in a position in our hearts which God did not design them to fill—that is covetousness. The sin to which it is most allied, and with which it is indeed identical, is idolatry. Now the essence of idolatry is the preference of the creature to the Creator, in whatever way this may appear. Idolatry causes man to abandon God for something else, either openly or at heart; and when man turns to God he leaves his idols. The love of riches, which is branded in Scripture as covetousness is such a love of them, and such a regard for them, as takes from man his trust in God, and transfers it to his possessions.'[1]

Its Guilt and Peril.

The guilt and peril of covetousness are the subject of frequent reference in Holy Scripture. Indeed, on no subject is Holy Scripture more express and emphatic than on the sin of covetousness. 'Thou shalt not covet' is 'writ large,' alike on its teachings and its biographies. Was not covetousness at the root of the first sin? Eve saw, coveted, and then partook of the forbidden fruit. Allured by

[1] *Gold and the Gospel.*

the prospect of increasing wealth, Lot chose the Vale of Sodom as his residence, with disastrous results to his character, his family and his estate. Achan coveted and took the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment at the capture of Jericho, and in consequence, not only perished himself, but brought defeat on the nation to which he belonged. The first sin of the Christian Church was the sin of covetousness, and Ananias and Sapphira will ever remain as frightful warnings of the sins of covetousness and lying. Felix, the Roman Governor, before whom St. Paul was tried, 'hoped that money would have been given him of Paul that he might loose him.' The Scriptures charge upon covetousness some of the foulest deeds that have ever stained humanity. 'Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light they practise it because it is in the power of their hands. And they covet fields and take them by violence; and houses and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.' Gehazi compromised his master and dishonoured his God to enrich himself. Balaam 'loved the wages of unrighteousness,' and 'for reward' brought a frightful disaster on the Israelites. And Judas sold his Master for gold.

The Scripture classification of the sin of covetousness is extremely suggestive. To-day, covetousness is the one sin a man may commit without losing his position in the Church, or indeed without incurring

its censure; in the Scripture it is classed *among the principal sins.* It is one of the marks of the great apostasy, the perilous times that in the last days shall come; it is associated with the most terrible of crimes, 'murders, thefts, *covetousness*'; it is named among the vices that exclude from the Kingdom of God 'fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, *covetous*, drunkards, revilers, extortionate.' Could any more terrible condemnation be pronounced of any single vice of human character? 'Covetousness is classed with intemperance—or the sins which appear to terminate on the man himself—because, like them, it tends to degrade and imbrute him. It is ranked with injustice—or sins directed against society—because, like them, if indulged, and carried out, it seeks its gratification at the expense of all social laws, whether enacted by God or man. And it is associated with impiety—or sins directly against God—because, like them, it effaces the image of God from the heart, and sets up an idol in His stead.' Well might our Lord utter the caution: 'Take heed; beware of covetousness.'

Its Prevention and its Cure.

How is this frightful evil to be dealt with? Where it does not exist, how may its growth be prevented? And where it does exist, how may its ravages be arrested and its roots destroyed? There is but one remedy for covetousness, and that is, the infinite grace of God. 'Diodorus Seculus relates that the forest of the Pyrenean mountains being set on fire,

and the heat penetrating to the soil, a pure stream of silver gushed forth from the earth, and revealed for the first time the existence of those rich lodes afterwards so celebrated. Covetousness yields up its pelf for sacred uses as unwillingly as if it were appointed to succeed the earth in the office of concealing it; but let the melting influence of the Cross be felt, let the fire of the Gospel be kindled in the Church, and its ample stores shall be seen flowing out from their hidden recesses, and becoming "the fine gold of the sanctuary."' Springing out of this great central fact, three correctives should be applied, whenever the spirit of covetousness exists. Covetous men should:

1. *Recognize the facts of life.*—Riches cannot meet man's deepest needs. The human soul has wants that no wealth can supply. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.' The truest life needs God, worship, fellowship, sympathy, service; and gold, however abundant, is no compensation for the want of these. And then, riches are held by an uncertain tenure; they make 'to themselves wings and flee away.' Disappointment is inevitable to those who trust in 'uncertain riches.' They may be rapidly acquired; they may be as rapidly lost. And again, they must be left behind at death. No miser can take his hoards with him into the future life; and he will be rich there, not according to the wealth he has accummulated, but according to the use he has made of it.

2. *Realize obligation to God.*—If all treasure is His, what interest have we in it but as His stewards. Our possessions are lent to us by His kindly hand; and to realize that is to strike at the root of covetousness.

3. *Acknowledge God's claims.*—Proportionate and systematic giving supplies the only corrective against the growth of covetousness if wealth accummulates. John Wesley once received a legacy, and he at once gave it away to some charitable object. To an applicant for assistance after the money had been disposed of, he replied: 'You should have applied before; I threw the money out of my hand, lest it should get into my heart.' Money has a thousand subtle ways of getting into men's hearts; and the only way to make it a servant and not a master is to consecrate it to wise and worthy uses, to dedicate it to the service of God and man.

Our Duty with regard to Money.

What, then, is man's duty with regard to money? Not to affect any contempt for it, not to consider its possession necessarily antagonistic to the higher life, but simply to treat it as a means to an end—personal improvement and the well-being of mankind. He may buy and sell and get gain, and may feel, in doing so, that he is a co-worker with God, and by wise use of his money he may 'glorify God,' and consecrate it as a root of all kinds of good, instead of all kinds of evil. Prudent in his forethought for the future, he will yet not care to keep in the race and amass money beyond

his present and future needs, and beyond his duty to those depending upon him; and, in the disposal of his wealth, he will remember his duty to the unfortunate in the battle of life; and as for the folly, the worse than folly, of leaving behind him monstrous wealth for glory's sake—the infatuation of heaping up riches when he knows not who shall gather them—he will rather shrink from such a responsibility, and hesitate before committing what may be so grave a crime.[1]

We are, as yet, a long way from the practical realization of the highest Christian morality in this matter, but we must not lower the standard to suit the fashion of the hour. The time may come—and if Christianity is ever to be triumphant, the time will come—when men will consider that they are only trustees for God and man. In that day the fever of avarice will be cured, the lust of greed will be gone, and upon all we have will be written: 'Holiness unto the Lord.'

[1] J. Page Hopps.

CHAPTER XV

CHRISTIAN GIVING: ITS PRACTICAL ADOPTION

WHAT means need to be employed in order to secure, among the members of our churches, the general adoption of systematic and proportionate giving? Two answers may be given to that question: Teaching on the topic, and practical measures for applying it.

(1) EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURE TEACHING

It is somewhat surprising that, seeing the subject of wealth and its responsibilities occupies so large a place in the Word of God, that it does not fill a larger place than is usually assigned it in the public exposition of Scriptural truth. If the ministry is to declare the 'whole counsel of God,' it cannot ignore this theme; and it is as unwise as it is disloyal to timidly shrink from an unpopular theme or an unpleasant duty. Our congregations need instruction on the responsibilities of wealth, and on the duty of efficiently maintaining the institutions of religion and philanthropy; and if the message from the pulpit gives an uncertain sound on these subjects, or no sound at all, there need be little surprise if the practice of the congregation is lax and unsatisfactory. Every congregation has a

In the Pulpit.

right to expect that the ministry shall set before it the highest ideals of Christian life and service, and this cannot be done if the privilege and duty of 'giving to God,' of 'honouring the Lord' with their substance and 'the first-fruits of their increase,' are persistently ignored. Before any general adoption of this principle of giving can be looked for, the theme must be given its rightful place in the ministration of Christian truth.

In Church Conferences.

It would also be a great gain if occasional conferences of the officials and members of the churches were held for the frank and kindly discussion of this theme. The work of the Church is one of common interest and common responsibility to all its members; and each is presumably anxious to do all that is possible to promote its success. And as the giving of wealth to the cause of God is, at least, one means of its maintenance and enlargement, free and brotherly discussion as to the *methods of giving* might do much to diffuse juster views on the theme than usually prevail, and bring about a more general recognition of this Christian duty in actual practice.

Among the Young.

The inculcation of this principle of giving on the young people of our families and Sunday Schools could not fail to be productive of immense good. The impressions made in early life are deep and permanent; and what is learnt in childhood is retained on into mature life. Children should be taught to be generous,

sympathetic, unselfish; and if the principle of giving to God is impressed on the sensitive mind of childhood and youth, though there may not be much scope for practising it then, it will bear fruit in coming years.

(2) PRACTICAL METHODS

Possibly not a little of the want of success that has attended the inculcation of this duty has been caused by the omission to supply a definite method for giving effect to it. Men hear the theme expounded, they admit the force of the arguments adduced in support of it, and they silently decide to adopt it themselves. But no definite plan is available for immediate action; delay occurs; other subjects intervene; the impression made fades; and hence no decisive step to put the theory into practice is taken. Of course, no one method would fit every case, but it would be well in every case if the resolution to give systematically and proportionately were put into writing, as in this suggested form:

Form of Dedication

After due deliberation and prayer, I do hereby record the resolution I have made to lay up the sum of £..... weekly (or monthly or quarterly as the case may be), to be expended on religious and benevolent objects. **Form of Dedication.**

Signed .....

Date .....

It would also be of service to some if the main objects to which 'the Lord's portion' was to be devoted were definitely determined, and set out as under:

	£	S.	D.
Maintenance of worship and Christian teaching, ...	:	:	:
Missions: Home and Foreign,	:	:	:
The claims of Philanthropy, ...	:	:	:

In cases where there is a regular weekly, monthly or quarterly income, the 'Lord's portion' can conveniently be set aside, and drawn on as needed. But with others it may be more convenient to keep the record as an account, headed with a form of dedication similar to the one suggested above.

SPECIMEN ACCOUNT

LAID UP IN STORE	£	S.	D.	EXPENDED	£	S.	D.
Proportion of Income:				Record Objects to			
Weekly, or - -				which Contribu-			
Monthly, or - -				tions are made,			
Quarterly - - -							
As the case may be.				Balance to next Account, - -			

In this case, the amount set aside will be periodically credited to the account, and the amounts distributed entered on the expenditure side, and the balance struck yearly, or when determined. System and method are essential to success in all human efforts. No plan will work itself. Business must have order and method or it fails; and in giving, it is indispensable that there should be order and method, or there will be little satisfaction or success.

In some American churches there has been adopted, with marked success, 'The Tithe Covenant plan for financing the kingdom of Christ.' By this covenant, such members of the church as become parties to it 'agree in the presence of God, and with one another,' to the following arrangement:

The Tithe Covenant.

(1) To tithe their income from all sources for Christian and philanthropic objects.

(2) To present that amount Sabbath by Sabbath at the collection made at the services of the sanctuary. In case of illness or other disability, the money to be sent to the church in an envelope, or reserved until the contributor is able to attend and present it himself.

(3) The amount thus contributed to be apportioned by the officers of the church, on some definite plan previously decided upon, to various objects as follow: Maintenance of the Church; Minister's Salary, &c.; Missionary Work at Home

and Abroad; Sunday School; Philanthropic Institutions; Miscellaneous expenses.

(4) That having entered into this covenant, the contributor shall not be considered under obligation to make any other subscription or pledge.

(5) That in case any contributor desires to make further gifts, they will be of the nature of free-will offerings, thank-offerings or other special gifts, and shall be devoted to the objects specified by the donor.

(6) That in matters not herein provided for, the officers of the church are empowered to act in its best interests.

By this arrangement each church could vary from time to time the proportion of its tithes given to any specific objects of Church work. In cases where heavy financial responsibilities remained on the structure, a larger proportion would be needed to meet these; whilst in other cases, where local liabilities were smaller, a more liberal amount would be available for the aggressive, benevolent, and missionary work of the Church.

Testimony is borne to the fact that where this method has been applied it has invariably increased the revenue of the Church; promoted harmony and co-operation among its members; released its ministers from the necessity of soliciting donations or devising plans for raising Church funds, and thus left them free to do their distinctly spiritual work; banished all anxiety on financial matters from the

minds of the congregation, and left them at liberty to enter upon the worship and work of the Church with one mind and heart, undisturbed by any financial worry whatever.

The Rev. George Harris, in presenting a system of weekly contributions in quite general use in the State of Rhode Island, urges the necessity of a system, and meets some of the objections in the following manner: 'The preacher may unfold with the utmost skill the principle that obligation is measured by ability; he may urge his hearers to set apart a fixed proportion of their income for the Lord, and if one man in the congregation adopts his eloquent advice, he thinks he has not preached in vain; but let the sermon be accompanied by a concise little card which contains figures and directions, so that a child can understand, and there will be hundreds in every congregation who will respond. Precisely this course must be adopted, if giving throughout our congregations is to be measured by ability. Every church must put an actual, definite system, explained in a few printed words, into the hands of every man, woman, and child, before any considerable number will give according to their ability. Good intentions cannot be trusted; there must be an existing and visible system, and the principle, whatever the details, must be the pledge of some amount to be given during the year.

'When new plans of any kind are proposed to a

church, opposition, or at least reluctance, is sure to be encountered. The people are naturally and justifiably shy of experiments. Yet some experiments must be made, and this experiment of systematic giving must be made. If the pastor is timid, the system will not be introduced, or if introduced, will have only a moderate success ; but if the pastor exercises good-natured determination, he will soon gain the support of the church, and then if he presents the subject faithfully, he will be astonished to find that so many in the congregation are ready to respond, and will blame himself for neglecting his duty so long.

'The earnest support of the pastor is necessary after a vote of the church has been given for the new system. He will need in his preaching not only to state strong reasons for adopting the plan; he will also need to meet objections which different individuals will bring forward to excuse themselves from making a pledge. More than one will say or think: "It is difficult to decide how much to give. I do not know what my income will be next year, nor indeed if I shall have any; it is almost impossible in a large business to separate twelve months and compute the gains, because so many transactions cover a more extended period. Unforeseen expenditure may be necessary. I do not know what percentage I ought to give, at any rate." The pastor, either in his sermon or in private, must be ready to reply. He will say: "If you are convinced

of the correctness of the principle, it must be there is some amount which you are morally certain you can give. For example, you are doubtful whether or not you can give one dollar a week; but you are certain you can give half a dollar—then give that, and make additions if you are able. Or, if you can decide in no other way, give as much as you have been in the habit of giving; get the whole amount, and divide it by fifty-two for your weekly pledges. If you say, I do not know how much I have been giving, the remark proves the need of a system; you ought to know. Almost anyone can make an estimate of usual income and necessary expenditure, which, if not exact, will be nearly accurate. At any rate, whatever you give, you probably will not err in the direction of excess. The phenomenon has seldom been observed of a person who became embarrassed by giving too much." A very good rule to recommend to such persons, and indeed to all, is that they make such a pledge as they honestly think is sufficient, and arrange their other expenses accordingly. First make some proper pledge, and then bring other outlays into conformity with it.

'Some will object that it is too much trouble to make these estimates and pledges, and to bring the money every Sunday; but it will vanish, perhaps, when the pastor says: "That objection I consider to be a recommendation. We have not taken nearly trouble enough; the Lord expects us to take just this trouble, and to find it a pleasure. My only fear

is, that you will not take the trouble you ought to take; that in some careless fashion you put down fifty cents or a dollar without any thought at all. If ladies will take as much trouble as they take to match the trimmings for one dress—the question of how much would be settled, and rightly settled; if gentlemen will devote as much time to it as they devote to choosing a new coat—proper decisions would be reached."

'Some will object, saying, What I can give is so little that it is not worth while to take the pledge and keep the account. But the cheery pastor reminds them that one of the chief recommendations of the system is that it swells small gifts into a large volume, and adds: "Can you discover that your obligation to give a little, if it is all you can afford, is any less real than the obligation of one who can give largely? In the parable of the talents, which servant was condemned? It was he who had but one talent; so little that he went and hid it in the earth! Among those who cast their gifts into the treasury while Christ looked on, who was commended? It was the poor widow who cast in two mites, which make a farthing."

'The pressure of hard times will be urged as an objection, to which the undismayed pastor will reply: "Don't limit your retrenchments to your benevolence. It is not very consistent for a Christian to stop giving, and keep up all other outlays to the old standard."

'For those who have had losses and are in debt, if they can give anything, it should be with a system, for such persons, above all others, should systematize their expenditure and benevolence.

'Any plan that may be proposed will be met with some objections. This plan has fewer objections and more recommendations than any plan of which we know; but so good a system as this, especially at its introduction, must have the unhesitating support of the pastor, or it will meet with little favour. But can any pastor be satisfied with the shiftless, casual habits of giving which so commonly prevail? Is it not worth all the trouble he may take to develop the latent resources of the congregation? Any pastor who despises the details of practical Christian work in his church, and devotes himself, as he says, to the pulpit, has sadly curtailed his opportunities as a Christian minister. The people wait for their pastor to take the lead in every good work; they often wonder why he does not devise plans of Christian benevolence, and appeal to them on behalf of suffering missionaries, and of perishing men and women who need the Gospel. It is a shame for ministers to let their churches go on in the old ruts, giving but a fragment of what they might give, while our missionary societies are struggling with debt, and are obliged to withdraw their workers from important fields. And so I say that the essential condition for introducing a plan of systematic beneficence is the unequivocal influence of the pastor in its favour.

Another important condition is the co-operation of those who have been the large givers in a church. If they hold aloof, success will not be so certain; but if they adopt the system for themselves, and encourage their children to adopt it, there can be little doubt of signal success.

'If the pastor is an earnest advocate of it, and if those who already give adopt it, the system can easily be introduced to supplant the careless and unequal giving which is now so common.'

There is much in these counsels well worthy of the serious consideration of those pastors and church officers in whose hands the administration of the affairs of the Church largely rests. Few will claim that the present methods of Church finance are satisfactory either to the givers or the getters. Few who have given any consideration to the subject can doubt that if the principle of systematic and proportionate giving could supersede the present fitful and uncertain methods, a great revolution would be effected, not only in the economics, but in the spiritual life of all our churches. It becomes, therefore, a matter of first concern that the leaders of our churches should themselves adopt this principle of giving, and then, by example, by precept, and by practical measures and methods, seek its adoption in every Christian community. The Church has resources sufficient for all her needs and all her opportunities. It is much

to be regretted that defective views on the stewardship of wealth, and defective methods of calling forth its consecration to Christian objects, have so long crippled her usefulness and checked her progress; and it is much to be hoped that the better methods here advocated may speedily secure universal approval, and become the common practice of the Church of Jesus Christ amongst men.

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